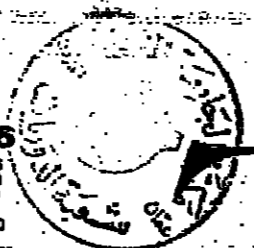


Saturday December 21 1996

Table with exchange rates for various countries including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, etc.



The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

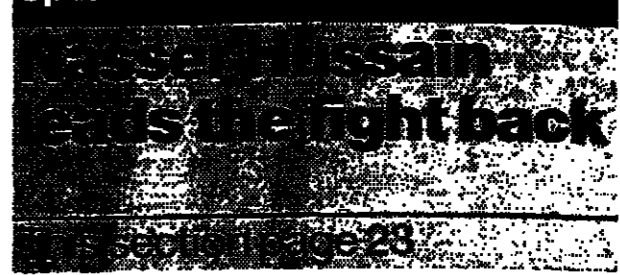
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The Week



Sport



Racists force Becker to leave Germany

Ian Traynor in Bonn

TENNIS star Boris Becker is planning to emigrate from Germany, probably to the United States, because of persistent racial harassment and threats aimed at his black wife and infant son.

In a television interview to be screened tomorrow evening in Germany, the world number two reveals that his wife Barbara and son Noah, aged three, are under 24-hour protection because of telephone threats and racial abuse.

On a recent trip to the doctor's in Munich, Mrs Becker and her son were escorted by three bodyguards.

According to Bild newspaper yesterday, Becker says in the recorded interview that he is not prepared to put Noah into a German school and intends to emigrate before his son reaches school age.

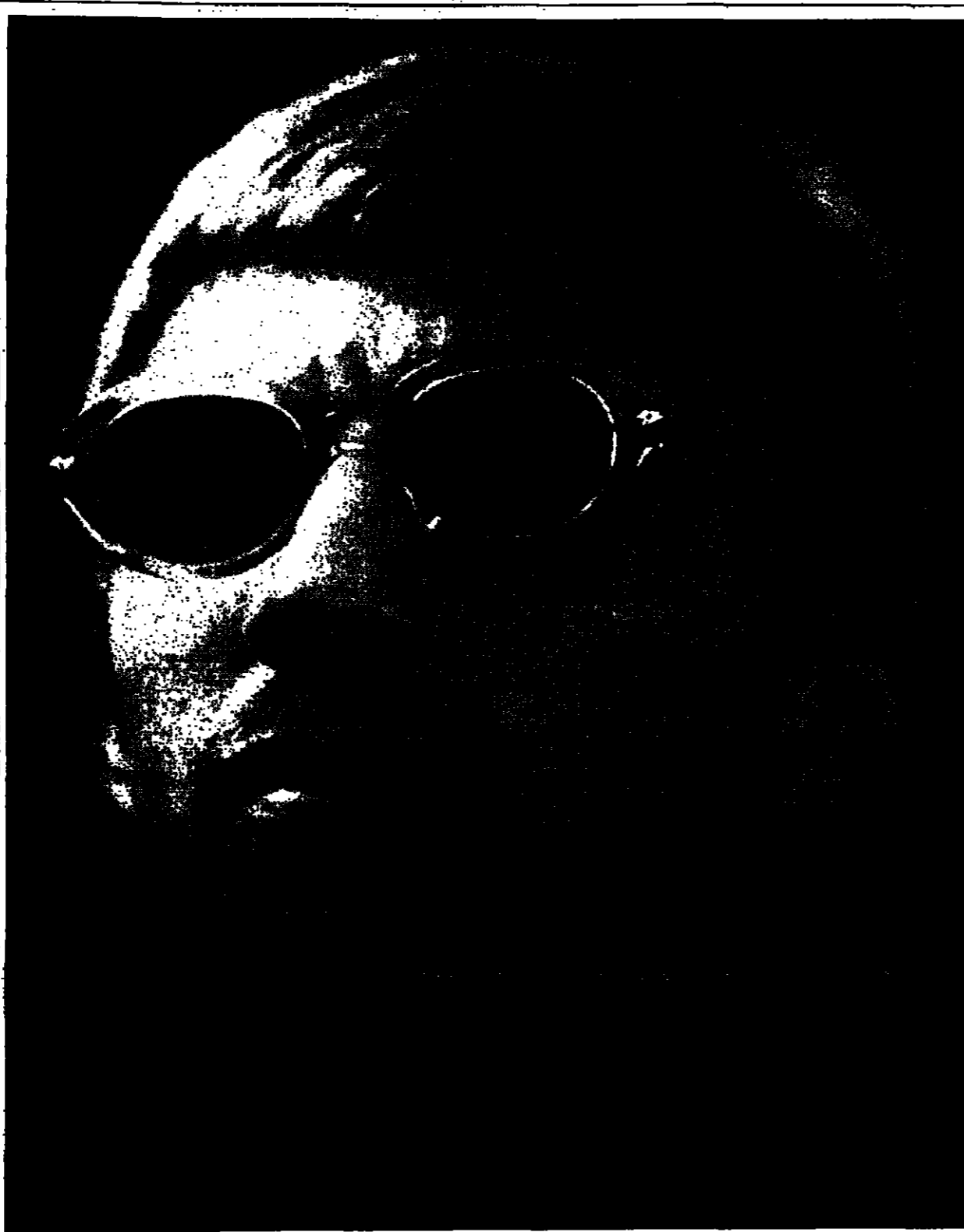
Becker recently bought a \$500,000 house in Florida. His plan to emigrate and his frank indictment of German racial intolerance are certain to shock and outrage many and hugely embarrass the German establishment.

Becker was hailed as Germany's prodigal son when he returned from tax exile in Monaco in 1994 to live at home and pay the price in heavy taxation. Since then he has earned huge admiration and sympathy as a straight-talking but fair commentator.

He was in Florida yesterday and could not be contacted.

The star also makes clear in the interview that he is desperate to have more children, but apparently not in Germany. If he was granted seven wishes, he says, the first six would be to have another child, the seventh to win Wimbledon again.

Meanwhile, speculation grew about a possible tax scandal centring on Becker. Bavarian tax officials raided his Munich home and took away sheaves of files.



Boris Becker, whose black wife and son required bodyguards for a recent trip to the doctor's

The issues of emigration and tax investigation were not thought to be linked. Investigators are believed to be examining his finances for the years 1990-93, despite the fact that

during that period Becker lived in Monaco and was liable for German tax only on money earned in Germany.

During the summer, Peter Graf, the father of the world's top woman player, Steffi, went on trial in Mannheim in southern Germany on charges of duping the taxman out of \$8 million due on her earnings.

Steffi successfully pleaded that she knew nothing of her own financial affairs. Mr Graf declared on the opening day of the court case that he was entirely responsible for her finances.

Fierce rebuke over failure to invest

Railtrack hoards £700m

Keith Harper Transport Editor

RAILTRACK, the privatised monopoly that runs the country's track and signals, was last night severely reprimanded by the railway watchdog and told to put its house in order within a month after failing to invest \$700 million of government money in Britain's crumbling rail system.

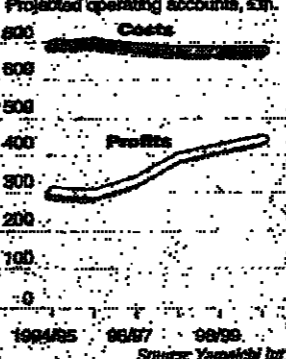
In an unusually outspoken rebuke, John Swift, the rail regulator, warned Railtrack's chairman, Robert Horton, that the current level of underspend was "totally unacceptable".

When the issue was raised yesterday by the pressure group Save Our Railways, an underspend figure of £330 million was mentioned. But later Railtrack admitted that the underspend was more than double that, and that its annual accounts showed an accrual on maintenance of \$700 million.

The investment warning follows a series of reprimands for privatised utilities over levels of investment. The electricity regulator is studying his industry's investment record and last week the water watchdog hit out at companies over their spending.

The accrued funds, which were buried in the last published Railtrack accounts for the year to the end of last March, comprise £267 million for property maintenance. A spokesman said: "This money will be spent. It has been earmarked for main-

Fast track



Projected spending accounts, £m

Lowest accident rate for many years

Labour reacted angrily to the revelations about Railtrack's underspend. Andrew Smith, shadow transport secretary, said the fact that the company could get away with starving the railways of millions of pounds of investment showed the privatised rail set-up was a farce.

"It is simply absurd that the excuse Railtrack comes up with is that the industry is not used to spending money." He said Railtrack was in a "privileged position of natural monopoly" and therefore had a responsibility to improve the railways.

Mr Swift has given the privatised company until next month to set out its investment programme "clearly and unequivocally". In a letter to Save Our Railways, he said he expected the company to demonstrate to his satisfaction that it was delivering its services effectively.

The letter demonstrates that tough times lie ahead for Railtrack, partly because of new powers that will be assumed by the regulator in the new year. He will no longer be answerable to the Transport Secretary, Sir George Young, and is likely to take a more independent line to protect consumers.

Save Our Railways' co-ordinator, Jonathan Bray, said Railtrack had broken the rules on how much it should spend on maintenance. "It has been caught putting profits first and essential maintenance second."

The Guardian Personality of the Year

This year's BBC Personality of the Year shortlist (which includes John Major and a woman who became only the second transsexual to be elected to the House of Commons) is set by a weekly magazine poll of readers' votes.

A grid of small portraits of the candidates for the Personality of the Year award, including Neil Hamilton, David Alton, and others.

Woman 'killed fiancé after row'

Evidence in road rage case weak and tenuous, barmaid's lawyer tells court

Owen Bowcott

TRACACY Andrews, the barmaid charged with murdering her fiancé in what police initially identified as a road rage killing, had threatened a previous boyfriend with a knife - and may even have pulled a weapon on the dead man once before, a court heard yesterday.

The mother-of-two, aged 27, is alleged to have stabbed Lee Harvey, aged 25, to death in an isolated country lane less than a mile from their home in Alvechurch, Worcestershire, after an argument over a black woollen hat. She spoke only once, to confirm her name and address, when she appeared before magistrates in Redditch, Worcestershire, to face the murder charge. She sat in the glass-pannelled dock, her eyes downcast throughout the three-hour hearing.

had not been traced and other witnesses insisted the Escort had been travelling alone.

Forensic evidence showed that blood on Andrews' clothing was consistent with splashes spurring from Mr Harvey's injuries as she severed arteries in his neck with a knife. A clump of hair, which matched Andrews', had been found close to her fiancé's hand, and three or four similar hairs were found in his fist.

Ms Moreton added: "There was an argument. They both got out of the car and she attacked him... she was the person who put the knife into the victim."



Tracy Andrews: denies murder charge

"They often rowed but always made up," said Mr Robinson. "She was deeply in love with him. He is the last person in the world she would have deliberately killed."

A navigation bar with sections for 'Inside Britain', 'World News', 'Finance', 'Sport', and 'Comment and Letters'. It also includes a 'The Week' section with 'Interview 15; Arts 18-19; Sports 20-24' and a barcode with the number 770261 307460.

A large advertisement for 'New Internationalist magazine' featuring the headline 'Keeping an eye on the world'. It includes a 'NO-RISK TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION' offer and contact information for the magazine.

Victory
ta deal



Mother-to-be Pamela Graham, who asked for a vitamin supplement and was accidentally given a drug used on men with prostate problems, had to fight to discover how the mistake happened PHOTOGRAPH: SAM MORGAN MOORE

'One mistake can be very serious. And the fact is that there appear to be an awful lot of mistakes'
Julie Luscombe's solicitor

'In the past, these things would have been dealt with quietly. Now we have aggressive and public litigation'
Brian Milstead, head of trust

'There will always be human error in hospital'

Stuart Millar assesses the claims and counter claims after a series of hospital incidents shakes a Cornish community

It was already the most notorious hospital in the country after a series of high-profile medical errors which have included a hypodermic needle being left inside a baby and a man being set alight on the operating table. But yesterday the crisis at Treliske hospital in Truro, Cornwall, deepened when the local health watchdog called for a full independent review of procedures amid accusations that public confidence in the health care it offers has been destroyed. The move by Cornwall community health council came after it emerged this week that a pregnant woman was accidentally given a drug normally used for treating men with prostate problems when she was taken to hospital suffering from stomach pains. Pamela Graham, aged 38, who is expecting her third child, was given Tamoxifen when she asked for folic acid, a vitamin supplement often taken by expectant mothers. At most other hospitals, this might have been regarded as an isolated incident and passed without comment. But it only served to underline the growing perception that there are deep-rooted problems at Treliske which cannot simply be written off as human error. The hospital became the focus of intense criticism when part of a hypodermic needle was left inside baby Ben Jones, who was born six weeks prematurely on Christmas Day 1994. He was given blood, lumbar puncture and swab tests when he was 10 days old, but the end of the needle broke off and was ignored by a doctor

Complaints

March 1993: Mary Field, 52, is admitted with severe headaches but is then sent home and told to take paracetamol. She dies the next day in the hospital car park from a brain haemorrhage. January 1995: Andrea Jones, mother of three-week-old Ben, finds part of a needle protruding from his back. The family receives substantial damages. January 1996: Valerie Tomlinson, 55, a nursing sister, takes part in an appendix operation without being qualified. She later takes early retirement. July 1995: Ray Rickard complains that his wife, Gwen, 68, was left to die of cancer "without dignity in a cubicle". He commits suicide six months later. September 1995: Frank Axford, 78, is set on fire on an operating table when a spirit-based fluid ignites, causing burns to his back and buttocks. "I went up like a Christmas pudding," he says. October 1996: Six-week-old Kieren Luscombe is given 10 times the correct dosage of morphine during a hernia operation. Long-term impact still unclear. December 1996: Pamela Graham, a pregnant mother of two, is given a drug used to treat male prostate problems after asking for folic acid, a dietary supplement



Julie Luscombe and Kieren, given 10 times too much morphine PHOTOGRAPH: SAM MORGAN MOORE

reaction provokes outrage. "It is a disgrace for them to say that it is us who are making them look bad, that they are the victims," said Julie Luscombe. "It is not them who have to live with the worry that their baby may have been permanently damaged. It is not them who have watched their baby nearly die because of somebody's mistake." She is now pursuing a claim against Treliske for both Kieren's ordeal and the trauma it caused her and her husband. Her solicitor, Philip Snell, is equally dismissive. His desk is laden with dozens of medical negligence claims he is pursuing against the hospital. "It may well be that the people at the hospital feel they do a very good job. But because of the nature of their work, one mistake can be very serious. And the fact is that there appear to be an awful lot of mistakes." Pamela Graham yesterday welcomed the call for an inquiry. According to Adrian Rickmail, a medical injuries specialist she consulted, the family has never been interested in receiving compensation. "Their only concern has been to find out how this mistake happened and to make sure it is not allowed to happen again." Mr. Rickmail, who is also a member of the community health council, believes that agreeing to an independent inquiry is the only way the hospital will be able to change its fortunes. "I accept that thousands of patients are treated perfectly successfully at Treliske, but they cannot be offered up as an excuse for treating anybody badly. There have been many high-profile cases and this has now become a vicious circle. The only way that circle can be broken is an independent inquiry. If that doesn't happen, my concern is that these issues will continue to happen and will be swept under the carpet."

Rifkind accuses China of treaty breach

Plan to scrap Hong Kong elected legislature provokes thinly veiled threats from Britain

BRITAIN yesterday issued an unprecedented public condemnation of Chinese plans to scrap Hong Kong's elected legislature as protesters in the colony hurled eggs at coaches ferrying pro-Beijing stalwarts to China to set up a rival "provisional" assembly. China was accused of breaching its treaty obligations. "There is no justification for the Chinese to replace a legislature elected openly and fairly by more than 1 million Hong Kong people," said the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, in a statement brimming with veiled but unmistakable threats. The Chinese ambassador to Britain, Jiang Ezhu, was summoned by Mr Rifkind late on Thursday for what officials described as a "robust" statement of the British position. Mr Jiang said Britain should "face reality". Mr Rifkind hinted heavily at wider pressure on Beijing. "We will work closely with the United States, the European Union and other international partners in monitoring observance of provisions of the joint declaration in Hong Kong," he said. The US has made it clear that, in its view, the provisional legislature is "unwise, unjustified and unnecessary". Britain raised the possibility of an appeal to the International Court of Justice in the

Hague, but would only do so with China's consent. Mr Rifkind also announced six-monthly reports to Parliament with special reference to human rights. These would be available to United Nations treaty-monitoring bodies. Today's naming of the provisional legislature will give Hong Kong two rival law-making bodies, as well as two rival sources of executive authority: the governor, Chris Patten, and his China-appointed successor, shipping magnate Tung Chee-hwa. Fearful of prosecution by British authorities, who consider the new legislature to be

illegitimate, the new 60-member assembly will meet in China until the handover. "Tomorrow will be a very black, dark day for Hong Kong," said Emily Lau, a member of a legislature elected in September but which China plans to disband. Mr Rifkind accused China of violating the 1984 Joint Declaration, a Sino-British accord that was referred to pointedly as "binding". "A body chosen by a hand-picked 'electorate' of 400 is not, in any reasonable sense, a legislature constituted by elections," as required by the Joint Declaration, "the statement went on. China claims Britain is to blame because it went ahead with political reforms in the colony in 1989 without the consent of Beijing, a step which it says violated the accord. Beijing yesterday underlined its disdain for foreign criticism with an announcement that Hollywood stars who had challenged China's policies in Tibet would be barred from the region. These include the director Martin Scorsese, who is making a film about the Dalai Lama that has enraged Beijing.

Sagan, man who brought Cosmos to earth, dies

CARL SAGAN, the relentlessly enthusiastic American astronomer who spent much of his life attempting to convince his fellow terrestrials that we are not alone in the universe, died in Seattle yesterday after a two-year battle with cancer. Sagan, who was aged 62, was best known for presenting the 1980 television series Cosmos, which awakened a generation to the mystery of life's origins and established the catchphrase "billions and billions of stars". Though he was most celebrated for popularising esoteric scientific ideas, he was also a dedicated researcher, responsible for several significant discoveries. These included showing that the surface of Venus is too hot to support life. Sagan last year received a bone marrow transplant after being diagnosed as having a form of cancer known as preleukemia syndrome. He died



Carl Sagan... 'billions and billions of stars' catchphrase

During the course of the evening, the invisible connection between the crime rate and the tax rate becomes apparent. Tax rates are crime rates — records of thefts committed by the IRS against the vulnerably affluent.

The Week, page 15

stand up to sceptical scrutiny," he said recently. He won the Pulitzer Prize for literature in 1978 for The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence. A companion book for his television series spent 70 weeks on the New York Times bestsellers list. **Obituary, page 7**

News in brief

Youth guilty of knife attack

A TEENAGE gang member was warned by a judge he faced "many years in jail" after he was found guilty yesterday of a near-fatal attack on the husband of Barbara Mills, Director of Public Prosecutions.

Dockers reject 'final' offer

A MASS meeting of Liverpool dockers yesterday unanimously rejected an "ultimate closing offer" from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, a £28,000 severance payment and improved pension for each of the 329 men fired for not crossing a picket line 15 months ago, or the chance to apply for up to 40 jobs.

Police to contest damages

SOUTH Yorkshire police intend to contest a £200,000 damages award granted last week to the half-brother of a man who died in the Hillsborough disaster. The insurers for the force yesterday lodged an appeal against a High Court ruling that John McCarthy, aged 35, should be compensated for post-traumatic stress disorder following the 1989 FA Cup semi-final, in which 96 people were killed.

Break for terrorists

MORE THAN 100 terrorists will be released from Northern Ireland's jails to spend Christmas with their families, the Government announced last night. A total of 62 republicans and 47 loyalists will be freed from the Maze prison on Monday to spend between seven and 10 days with their families.

Jail for 'record' driver

A MOTORIST who in 1994 was credited with having set the record of 158mph for a speeding offence was jailed for four months yesterday for driving while still banned for the speeding offence. Achille Mazzotta, a builder, aged 32, of Swindon, Wiltshire, was also banned for a total of two years by Swindon magistrates after he admitted driving while disqualified and without insurance.

PC Nigel Brown

AN article which appeared in the Guardian February 10 1992 entitled "Jewish officer ready to quit Met over anti-Semitism" reported allegations made by PC Nigel Brown that he had been forced to leave the Metropolitan Police Force as a result of his colleagues' anti-Semitic behaviour. The Guardian accepts that the allegations are false and that the report, based on a report from a news agency, shocked and hurt Mr Brown's colleagues. The Guardian has agreed to pay damages plus court costs to the men in question.

Correction

BATH University, which achieved one of the biggest improvements in research ratings in the funding councils' 1996 assessment exercise, and Royal Holloway College, University of London, which also did well, were omitted from yesterday's table of top universities. Bath (66 per cent of staff in grade 5 and 6 departments) comes 6th and Royal Holloway (46 per cent) joint 13th.

Miracles, television, Nigel Slater in the kitchen, chocolates, toys...and an old man with a beard. Life's guide to the perfect Christmas. The Observer

Late night habits of the young Ken Clarke, and all that modern jazz



The late-night man... Kenneth Clarke recording his programme at the Jazz FM studios

Ken Clarke Arts Correspondent

FORGET the Spice Girls praising Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair resurrecting Edie: now it's the turn of the heavyweights.

lonius Monk and Charlie Parker in his list of musical favourites for an hour-long Boxing Day programme on Jazz FM, which broadcasts to London and the North-west.

again, to see if there are still any late-night people in London. His early years in the Commons left him with more time to indulge his enthusiasm for jazz.

When he is away from home he still has time to stay up late. "When I'm abroad I still go to jazz clubs because there are no red boxes and I can stay up at night."

ing a drink and meeting 'girls' in Nottingham. The first record he bought was Louis Armstrong's Potato Head Blues, which he describes as a great classic.

Ken's sounds

- Cottontail: The Duke Ellington Orchestra. Potato Head Blues: Louis Armstrong and the Hot Five. Now's the Time: Charlie Parker Quintet. Double Talk: Fats Navarro. Lover Man: Billie Holiday. In Walked Bud: Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers (featuring the Marsalis brothers). Rhythm-a-ning: Thelonius Monk. Saturday Night at the Cosmos: George Adams and Don Pullen Quintet. Better Git it in Your Soul: Charles Mingus.

Millennium exhibition loses its chief

Departure points up growing doubts on financial viability

Ken Clarke

THE political in-fighting surrounding the Greenwich Millennium Exhibition intensified yesterday when Barry Hartop, chief executive of Millennium Central, the operating company for the celebrations, stood down.

ter money to millennium projects, will replace Mr Hartop. Commission sources said this could not be confirmed until the exhibition was given the go-ahead, possibly in the new year.

pointed to Millennium Central only on a three-month secondment from the Welsh Development Agency, he had said he expected to see the project through to completion.

Roger Freeman, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The change is designed to enable the Government to use National Lottery money through the commission to underwrite the project.

tion of the commission's life. He said yesterday: "There cannot be unlimited access to lottery money."

until we see a reasonable budget we're not going to commit ourselves. It is the latest in a series of blows to the celebrations.

Dahling, these cucumber sandwiches are really a bit thick

Jan Katz in New York

MICHAEL Gambon glanced disapprovingly at his tea cup. "Can you imagine? Jasmine tea in lukewarm water without any milk?"

Player's Club, the dozen or so British thespians gathered for "an old-fashioned English tea" surveyed the nibbles - Danish pastries, petits fours and inch-thick cucumber sandwiches - with equal distaste.



Michael Gambon... 'wrong tea, no milk'



Stephanie Beacham... 'Me, homesick? I prefer Malibu'

David Hare's Skylight, Elaine Paige (Sunset Boulevard), Fiona Shaw (The Westland) and David Threlfall (The Rehearsal). The guests at the tea were described as "homesick Brits of Broadway" but not all appeared to share the sentiment.

Edwin Booth, the 19th century American actor who founded the Player's Club to emulate London's Garrick. Nibbling a cucumber sandwich - "much too thick" - Ms Paige said she missed English TV and world news.

Millionaire's daughter put suffocated body in freezer while suffering from depression

Mother who killed baby is given probation

THE daughter of a millionaire who put a pillow over the head of her new-born son was yesterday put on probation for three years after pleading guilty to infanticide.

rected with overwhelming sympathy to Ms Gifford's "tragic" predicament. A spokeswoman for the Family Planning Association said the "singular and extreme case" highlighted the isolation and vulnerability young women can feel in an unplanned pregnancy.

She gave birth in the bathroom of her flat early in April & The baby appeared to be coughing and not very well. She took him into the living room and tried to breast feed him, before both she and the baby fell asleep.



Emma Gifford leaving the Old Bailey: 'She didn't know what to do'

Passing sentence, the Recorder of London, Sir Lawrence Verner, said: "In a situation such as this the law does not wish to punish. The law wishes to help because help is still required."

'Case emphasises need to make sure young know of agencies to help' Centres, which provides contraception and counselling to young people, said: "This is clearly a truly tragic case. It must be horrendous to give birth alone."

Mr Boyce said: "She felt as though she had no option. She didn't know what to do. So she placed a flannel, which she had used to clean the child, over his face and put a pair of her boyfriend's pyjama bottoms over his head, and covered his head with a pillow for a couple of minutes and then went away and was physically sick."

Ms Gifford then dressed and went to work. When she returned she removed the pillow. She then rang her brother, Christopher, who came to collect her and unknowingly the child because she had it with her and drove her to the family home in Kent for the night. The next day she returned to the flat, which her father had provided for her, and placed the child's body in the freezer.

Police had found insufficient evidence on the cause of death to bring charges of infanticide against Ms Gifford before her full confession.

Handwritten Arabic text at the bottom of the page.



Bets are off as triads hit Macao

Andrew Higgins reports on a shooting which has thrown the usually peaceful Portuguese colony into a state of turmoil

A SURVIVOR of Portugal's vicious colonial war in Mozambique, Lt-Col Manuel Antonio Apolinario, took two bullets in the head at the wheel of a new office car parked between Christmas trees and lights.

He was shot at pointblank range with a People's Liberation Army-issue handgun — the third person in less than a week gunned down by motorcycle hitmen in Europe's oldest Asian outpost.

A tiny Portuguese enclave across the Pearl River delta from Hong Kong, Macao is usually described as a sleepy, shabby and sometimes seedy gambling haven on the coast of China.

But it has suddenly become dangerous, as the fly-blown charm of casinos and clubs mutates into something more sinister. Col Apolinario was shot on the Praia Grande, a once elegant boulevard which bears the scars of a fabled economic boom.

He had just knocked off work at Macao's Gambling Inspection and Co-ordination Directorate, housed on the 18th floor of a grubby tower block shared with the Mena Lisa Sauna and Lost City Night Club.

"On paper the Portuguese do not give up control of

at a hilltop hospital overlooking Macao's main gambling district. The first bullet tore through his cheek and ripped a hole in his jaw. A second missed his spinal chord by millimetres.

"They wanted to kill me. It is impossible to find out who did it, but I want to find out why," he told a friend in hospital last week. "Why did someone come and talk to me first? In the past they always came to talk."

As head of Macao's police intelligence during the 1980s, he had frequent contact with a brutal but structured criminal underworld. Today, the old rules no longer apply.

"Macao City of Fear. The Peace is Finished," screamed the local Portuguese language tabloid, *Macao Hoje*. Less alarmist but perhaps more alarming was a statement by the Xinhua news agency, China's de facto embassy. Usually content to applaud Portugal for not copying Britain's *Chris Patten*, Xinhua said the mayhem could upset the transition and demanded tough action.

Even mobsters have voiced outrage. The day after Col Apolinario was shot, the editor of *Macao-Boje*, Joao Severino, received a telephone call inviting him to a luxury beach hotel: the mob wanted to tell its side of the story.

"Everyone was blaming the secret societies and they were very upset," said Mr Severino. He was met by two reputed politicians and the representative of another group. They denied ordering



Growing violence has transformed the fly-blown charm of Macao's clubs and casinos into something more sinister

PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD BAKER

the previous day's hit. As a gesture of good faith, they offered to cut off their fingertips. Mr Severino said this would not be necessary.

"Whenever you have casinos, you have an underworld. Where there is money there are triads," said Luis Alfonso, a prominent local lawyer. "But Macao used to be a quiet place. There was an internal balance among the triads. Now this balance has been destroyed."

Helping to disrupt the equilibrium is a plunge in property prices and an influx of hoodlums from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China — just five minutes by taxi from the centre of Macao. Many date the start of Macao's crime wave to the opening last December of an international airport.

The imminent return of the nearby Hong Kong to China has added to Macao's allure as a sanctuary for criminals.

Out-of-town mobsters are not the only newcomers. To beef up security, Macao's monopoly casino operator, STDM, has recruited Gurkhas — Nepalese fighters of legendary ferocity and dependability — to stand guard at the territory's nine casinos.

The assassination attempt against Col Apolinario was the most serious attack against a senior Portuguese official in Macao since the murder in 1849 of the then governor, Joao Ferreira do Amaral. He was beheaded after expelling Chinese customs agents.

Col Apolinario's misfortune could also be part of a bigger

game. As Macao prepares to return to China in 1999, loan-sharks and pimps are not the only people eager to mark out their territory.

Among those muscling in is a mainland Chinese firm run by the State Security Bureau. When STDM, the casino conglomerate, rebuffed business overtures from the Chinese company, a bomb went off outside a hotel over which it had been negotiating.

STDM, or Sociedade de Turismo e Diversoes de Macao, has held an exclusive franchise to Macao's gambling industry since 1962 and last year contributed nearly 2400 million in taxes. But it is no longer seen as invincible: its monopoly comes up for renewal in 2001.

The proliferation of VIP rooms to service junkie gamblers — who now account for

well over half of all revenue — has already loosened its grip. It provides croupiers and other staff but must work with outsiders to keep big-spenders coming in. "People take it for granted that if there is violence it must be related to casinos. This is just speculation," said Louis Ng of STDM. "We are just a commercial entity. We really hope the authorities can do something to stop all this."

Macao's Portuguese administration, staffed with veterans of Portugal's colonial wars in Africa and known more for long lunches than long-term planning, has retreated into a bunker of shell-shocked silence. "The Portuguese here think they are still in the jungle in Africa dealing with Pygmies," said one veteran resident.

It took a lunchtime murder outside police headquarters to stir the authorities into action. Macao's two separate and often feuding forces, the Judiciary Police and the Public Security Police, were ordered to form joint armed patrols of casinos.

Promises from China of security co-operation have aroused Portuguese suspicions of a disguised early takeover. "Who gets advantage from all this violence? Who would benefit most from having people say that the Portuguese police are not up to the job?" asked one official.

When China takes over Macao in 1999 it will face few of the difficulties it will confront in Hong Kong when Britain pulls down the flag next summer, a hostile local elite, a Chinese political

elite, a boisterous media. But it does have one big worry. As soon as Britain pulls out of Hong Kong, the People's Liberation Army marches in to take the place of British troops. In Macao, however, there are no Portuguese troops to replace. Nor is there any provision in any of the agreements between China and Portugal for a Chinese military or security presence after 1999.

So far the only person arrested in possible connection with the attack on Col Apolinario is a shadowy concert organiser known across Macao as "Broken Teeth". He was picked up for violating a casino entry ban, and his name had appeared on a blacklist published shortly before the assassination attempt.

As Col Apolinario recuperates, Macao is still trying to come to terms with what has happened. "There was a gentleman's agreement. The Portuguese were on one side and the Chinese were on the other. Each lived in their own world. There was contact but no interference," said Mr Alfonso, the lawyer. "The Apolinario case has changed that. The boundary has been crossed."

'Hundreds of millions of dollars are at stake. The gangs know the police have lost control. It is simple: they are no longer afraid'

Penny drops in Albania as savings scam collapses

JONAS ROBERTSON in Tirana

HUNDREDS of thousands of Albanians will be left penniless by a pyramid savings scam which was on the brink of collapse in Tirana last night.

Crowds clashed with police on Thursday, after the woman behind the fraud, known only as Sudja, failed to make the huge promised interest payments to savers. Families besieged her offices again yesterday.

Sudja, an Albanian gypsy and former shoe factory worker, tempted hundreds of thousands of Albanians to give her their life savings by offering 50 per cent interest. The pyramid scheme used new savers' deposits to pay the interest.

In the less developed post-communist countries of eastern Europe, such as Russia and Romania, such schemes have raised millions of naive savers. Now a size-

able number of the 3 million people in Albania, the poorest country in Europe, are about to become poorer still.

Sudja has failed to make payments for more than three weeks. Families marched from Sudja's office to Tirana's central Skanderbeg Square on Thursday to protest at the government's failure to intervene, but police beat them back. At least four people were detained.

"The police helped Sudja when we gave her our money. Now, when we try to take it, they only beat us," wept an old woman who was clutching a deposit slip.

Sudja, claiming she needs time to do her accounts, promised to reopen her office on Wednesday this week. On Thursday, when the office stayed shut, furious men smashed the windows and tried to tear down the iron bars.

One man said: "There is no money because the government used it to pay for

the elections. At least in Serbia people are allowed to demonstrate."

Flanked by police, Sudja finally leaned out of a fifth-floor window and told the crowd to be patient. She added that if she was hurt, no one would get their money.

Twenty people received a partial repayment after the demonstration. One said she would immediately retreat if in one of the eight other crooked schemes in operation.

Tension remains high, with most people blaming the government for the collapse of the company.

Casus Elhrit, the World Bank's representative in Tirana, said he did not know of another country where so much money had been invested in pyramid schemes.

The government has set up a parliamentary committee to investigate the country's nine money schemes, but its work has been kept secret.

News in brief

- Nordic bikers convicted**
A Hell's Angel and two members of affiliated gangs were convicted yesterday of murdering the leader of the rival Bandidos gang and attempting to kill his companions in an ambush in March at Copenhagen airport.
- Fishermen freed**
Italy said yesterday that Libya had decided to release two Italian fishermen held for four months and convicted this week of violating its territorial waters. — Reuter
- Nazi loot inquiry**
Sweden said yesterday it would launch a formal investigation into allegations by the World Jewish Congress that looted Nazi gold from the second world war had found its way into official Swedish bank vaults. — Reuter
- Iraq holds 'spies'**
Iraq said yesterday it had arrested a sabotage and espionage ring working for the CIA and that all had given full confessions. The CIA refused to comment. — AP
- Jail clampdown**
Bangladesh strengthened security at prisons throughout the country yesterday to prevent further unrest as prisoners at two jails refused to end their strikes. — Reuter
- Negotiator faints**
Italy's European commissioner Emma Bonino collapsed after 21 hours of negotiations on fishing quotas with EU ministers. Her spokesman said she fainted from exhaustion. — Reuter
- Kurd bases hit**
Turkish warplanes and helicopter gunships have bombed two Turkish Kurdish rebel bases in northern Iraq, a military officer said yesterday. The raid was carried out on Thursday. — AP

Religious police bring out the big sticks to beat vice in Kabul

FOOTBALL is out. So are waves and salutes, public signs of affection between men and women, paper bags, television — alcohol, of course — and all music except for the marching songs of the Taliban religious movement which for nearly three months has tried to return the Afghan capital to the ways of the rough villages from which it grew.

At the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice — a sort of religious police which has been issuing decrees against all things considered immoral by the Taliban — Maulvi Inayatullah Baligh is still not satisfied.

Mr Baligh, the deputy minister for vice and virtue, wears the long-tailed turban of the Taliban although he is a career bureaucrat who performed the same duties under the previous Islamic government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, which was chased out of Kabul by the Taliban nearly three months ago.

"In the past this office talked, but it did not act. We are now prepared to cope with all immoralities," he said.

The youthful fighters of the Taliban, who career around Kabul in pick-up trucks with white flags flying, already enforce the call to Friday prayers by clubbing people into mosques.

Mr Baligh this week acted to increase worship every day of the week with a decree requiring shopkeepers to set aside places for prayer.

But his office focuses overwhelmingly on vice. Mr Baligh has 100 religious inspectors at his disposal in Kabul who are empowered to deliver instant judgments on those who offend the Taliban's strict dress code, or are discovered drinking, committing robbery, or having illicit sex — punishable by death for married people, 100 lashes for those who are single.

"They deal with these

"Whenever we catch them doing immoral things, we can do anything we want. We can execute them, we can kill them"

Suzanne Goldenberg (right) in Kabul talks to the man who is taking a hard line on enforcing the Taliban's moral code

crimes when they capture them, exactly at that time," he said. "Whenever we catch them doing immoral things, we can do anything we want. We can execute them, we can kill them."

But they are less harsh with engaged couples who may forget themselves and hold hands in public. "If we catch them, we separate them, and then we give some slaps to the boy's face."

Women must wear the head-toe shroud of the chaderei, with a ill-gree panel over the eyes. Men must grow beards and are advised to cover their heads with woolen skullcaps, embroidered hats or the flowing turbans favoured by the Taliban.

Government workers who ignore warnings to grow beards face dismissal and Mr Baligh said six justice ministry employees have been sacked so far. Other civil servants have been sacked for not attending prayers at the office.

Mr Baligh said he is confident that Kabul's 150,000 working women will observe the ban on work, unless they are employed in hospitals.

Mr Baligh's police have discovered no drinkers so far, only caches of alcohol. No adulterers have been apprehended and no woman has suffered the official punishment of 29 lashes for showing her face in public. "So far we have not given real punishment, only beating with small sticks," he said, swishing his hand through the air with relish.

But his inspectors have had unauthorised support from Taliban foot soldiers. Last week, Radio Starria — the renamed Radio Afghanistan — announced that 250 women had been beaten in a single day for violating a ban on appearing in public without wearing chaderei.

Mr Baligh protested. "In fact, we are in charge. The Taliban are not in charge, but they interfere in our task. We have had to warn them not to interfere."

But there are signs that Kabul's religious police are moving towards a harder line. On Wednesday, the supreme court authorised the first execution according to the Islamic law of retribution. At a football stadium in central Kabul, hardened fighters watched in evident satisfaction as a bereaved man shot dead the killer of his pregnant wife and children.

Although the restrictions are unbearable for educated people, many are prepared to



Suzanne Goldenberg (right) in Kabul talks to the man who is taking a hard line on enforcing the Taliban's moral code

Turkey to close casinos

REUTER in Ankara

TURKEY'S Islamist prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, said yesterday the country's casinos would be closed and a public lottery discontinued because of concerns about their demoralising effect on Turkish society.

"They have begun to spread to every corner of Turkey like an illness," Mr Erbakan said before a cabinet meeting at which the future of the gaming industry was expected to be discussed.

The tourism ministry has been considering proposals to exclude Turks from gaming

establishments or to outlaw the sector entirely.

Government pressure for complete closure appeared to be gathering earlier this week when Tansu Ciller, the foreign minister, said she wanted the country's 76 casinos shut down.

The current initiative is the culmination of a series of restrictions on opening hours and dress imposed by the Islamist-led government since coming to power in June. It has had limited success in imposing a previous order to exclude Turks from casinos.

Tourism ministry officials say work on plans to limit casinos to three designated areas is continuing despite

the initiative. An island near Istanbul and various tourist resorts are among recommended locations.

Gaming industry officials have protested strongly against the plans. They say gambling will continue in illegal casinos, or abroad, with no tax benefits to the country. Government revenues from casinos totalled about 247 million in 1996, and 261 million in 1998 up to mid-November, according to tourism ministry figures.

Concern in government circles about the social impact of casinos has been exacerbated recently by media reports of suicides and family hardship linked to gambling debts.

No future for rebels trapped in past

Peru's 'post-modern' guerrillas draw their inspiration from history but ignore contemporary facts, writes **Richard Gott**

THERE IS a long and honourable tradition of guerrilla activity in Latin America that has ebbed and flowed over decades and centuries. Independence from Spain in the early 1900s would never have been successful without the innumerable guerrilla armies that helped to put in place a new world order. Oligarchic, unrepresentative and authoritarian regimes have run most of the continent ever since. More than a century later, in the 1950s and 1970s, guerrilla groups sprung up everywhere in the (usually) vain hope of repeating the success of the Cuban revolution. So the Peruvian rebels that have resurged in Lima with such a dramatic flourish, and which have plenty of foreign-runners. Indeed for long-term

their willingness to refer back to the triumphs of their predecessors. Tupac Amaru himself sparked off a rebellion in 1780 that reached from the countryside into every Spanish town in the Andes. In the 1960s, Cuban-backed guerrillas involving the images of Che Guevara tried to do the same, not just in Peru but all over the continent. Yet today's revolutionaries seem to owe more to current abstract theories about culture than to a detailed consideration of historical example. In the 1990s in Peru, and also elsewhere in Latin America, we have seen the emergence of post-modern guerrilla movements that are rather different from those that appeared before. The iconography may look the same — the masks, the weapons, the red flags — but the ideology is different. The aim of these armed bands is not to seize power and effect a revolution in society through armed struggle, defeating regular armies through guerrilla warfare. That would be a hopeless

task. Their more simple purpose, through the weapons of imitation, parody, and pastiche, is to cast doubt on the viability of the current neo-conservative ideology that spread its suffocating blanket over the entire continent. Through their manipulation one knows that it is many years since Fidel Castro's regime gave anyone a helping hand. They claim to be fighting "imperialism", yet in the absence of the Soviet Union, which was once able to provide a counter-weight to the regional superpower, there is no possibility that local resistance movements will be allowed to survive. Guerrilla means "a small war", yet today's rebels are hardly capable of sustaining a traditional small war. Counter-insurgency techniques are infinitely more developed than they were 30 years ago. Much of Latin America's rural hinterland has been drained of population and small anti-government armed groups can only survive as local irritants in obscure areas. While immense stonytowns can spawn endless recruits for rebel groups, there is no common culture of the kind that Islam provides for the revolutionaries of the Middle East. Even Peru's Sendero Luminoso has been hampered into the ground.

Nor is there now much opportunity to conduct the classic revolutionary war where the "small war" guerrilla sparks off a larger conflagration. In the case of Mexico, the localised guerrilla outbreak in the rural areas of Chiapas, on Mexico's southern border with Guatemala, failed to ignite much activity elsewhere. The Zapatistas have been using the 20th century peasant leader Emiliano Zapata as their emblematic figurehead, in much the same way that the Peruvians have been localising the 18th century rebel Tupac Amaru, but these historic invocations have had little effect. The notoriously compromised Mexican left has not been able to use the guerrilla challenge to unite its own political forces against the government. When the old and creaking political system in Mexico does break down it will be to the benefit of the right rather than the left. The outlook in Peru is equally pessimistic. Peru in

The grounds for dissatisfaction are legion, and groups like Tupac Amaru have no difficulty in finding recruits. But the cards are stacked against them. Fujimori may get a bad press for closing down the country's congress, but he has received firm international support and remains popular at home. The rebels' only real hope of securing change is through martyrdom, and the Japanese government — still uncomfortable with its role as a global political player — has seen moving heaven and earth to prevent this. The original rebellion of Tupac Amaru was drowned by the Spaniards in blood. Hundreds of Indians were executed in the morning and in the afternoon. It was a terrible warning, and there was silence for a generation. But then the Spaniards were gone. *Richard Gott is the author of Guerrilla Movements in Latin America.*

When Mexico's political system breaks down, it will be to the benefit of the right, not left

of the "propaganda of the deed" they hope to destabilise the governments of their countries and, from the ensuing chaos, to set them off on a new path. These guerrillas use the same words and rhetoric as their forerunners, but their slogans have mostly lost their meaning. They still invoke the Cuban example, yet every-

Fujimori may get a bad press for closing down the congress but he remains popular

military flat and populism enforced through charismatic corruption. Springing from nowhere, and without party label or baggage, (President Alberto) Fujimori has imposed the standard economic programme of the new global world order. As everyone now recognises, this means the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Leader comment, page 8

People of Zaire have mastered art of getting by

Ruaridh Nicoll in Kinshasa finds the world of politics very far from the appalling misery of daily life

IT IS the end of term. The teachers hover in the laboratory at the Institute Vdjili, a high school specialising in science on the outskirts of Kinshasa. The room is filthy and very hot, just a shack with a long bench of smashed tiles running down the centre.

One of the teachers points towards the ceiling where the equatorial sky can be seen beyond. "When it rains the teacher cannot stand at the blackboard," he says. Even Zaire's leaders corruption cannot slow time and with each of the past six years, life has become more difficult for the people who teach here. The world may be watching Zaire, expecting its disintegration, and President Mobutu Sese Soko may have returned after a long absence, full of promises to fight and win the war in the east. But in the school these things are just politics, nothing compared to facing the daily evil.

Each morning Andre Mashikote, the school's attendant, turns his borrowed face to the ledger on his desk. A column falls alongside the names of the 1,200 students; his pen runs down, checking for those without a tick. Then he walks to the classrooms where between 80 and 100 students sit three to a desk. There are no pens, books or jotters and the teacher stops as the attendant walks in.

Mr Mashikote calls the names of the children on his list — kids whose parents have failed to pay the \$3 monthly fee — and then escorts them from the school grounds. "They come the next day because they want to learn, but since they have no financial means they are not allowed in," he says. "It is very sad, they stand around until the classes are over." Mr Mashikote cuts a miserable figure in his plywood cubbyhole.

That schools used to have facilities like a laboratory tells a tale. Amidst luxury has always been reasonably good, but in 1990 the government began its transition to democracy and, more than 14 governments later, everything has gone to hell. One in three children now receive no schooling. But education would not exist in Zaire if the teachers and parents had not taken over responsibility for the schools in the vacuum that was left when, in 1993, the government cheques stopped arriving.

There is unlikely to be an election, as promised, next year. The war in the east has already given the government its excuse to back away from its promises. What the transition has brought instead is misery. "Leadership has been suppressed, the military is disorganised, the government is weak and the political class is totally irresponsible," says Cleophas Kamitatu-Masamba, a former minister and ambassador, who sitting in a room surrounded by portraits of himself. "Because of the vacuum, the president has complete, total and absolute power." It is easy to see where the money the school needs has

gone. On the slopes of Binza Hill, stand the grey guts of a large half-built house. It is nicknamed the White House by Kinshasa's residents, who recognise the vast, bow-front in the skeletal structure. Around it, beautiful homes in lush gardens spread away into the distance. The unfinished house belongs to the prime minister, Kerwa wa Dondo.

It is almost impossible to describe the way this country operates. Foreigners are robbed by officials at the airport and \$130 for accreditation is placed in a folder marked "pour le ministre". But this is nothing to what the population have to put up with. "The soldiers are our enemy," says one resident. "They stop you, strip you naked and steal everything. Last week they even took my shirt."

It is just the beginning. There are no human rights, the hospital barely functions, there is no transport and little communication. The American and the Portuguese ambassadors could only watch as the government sold half of a well-known avenue outside their embassies to a supermarket looking for parking space.

Yet the people endure, hospitable and friendly, and unwilling to criticise their president because it would be rude to pick on a man who is ill with prostate cancer. There is laughter when people here talk of coups and revolution. "The situation here could never happen in another country. There would have been a bloody revolution."

Western diplomat says: "There would have been a bloody revolution. But these are quiet people, it is a country that is used to living away from power."

Mr Kamitatu-Masamba continues his analysis: "The population is living in indescribable misery, but since Rwanda and the rebels attacked there has been a great rise in nationalist feeling. The president appears like the man who has saved the country's integrity in the past, so now the people look to him." In the east, the war seems to have ground to a halt. The rebels' advance has stalled, despite Zairean forces falling back to the regional capital of Kisangani. There is a vast "grey area" between the armies, awash with anything up to 2,000 refugees. Meanwhile the good people of Kinshasa get on with their lives. It seems the only thing worse than Zaire disintegrating is that it might remain the same. Lema Kiensidna, a father of 11, holds some plants with which he is going to make a stomach potion that he hopes to sell. He used to be a tailor but people are too poor to ask for his services these days. "Everytime I have any money it is quickly gone," he says. "Now I don't have enough to feed my family or educate them." Asked how he copes, he shrugs. What he means is that he believes in the *debraulidise* — the art of getting by.



Riot police in Belgrade block the road to a bridge in the centre of the Serbian capital during a student protest before the rush hour yesterday. The tense stand-off coincided with the arrival of a delegation from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to investigate allegations by the opposition Zajedno coalition. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID BRAUCHAU

Black English 'a language' says US school board

Richard Thomas in Washington

BLACK English, or "ebonics" — celebrated by rap artists and black activists — has been declared a second language by a California school board, opening the door to extra cash for bilingual teaching and provoking an immediate political row.

Arguing that phrases such as "he be walkin'" and "she done did it" are expressions from a language carved out by West African slaves, the Oakland district has ordered

schools to teach black children in their own tongue.

But with California embroiled in a legal civil war over the recently approved Proposition 209 — which would end affirmative action and positive discrimination in favour of ethnic minorities — the move is likely to heighten racial tension and fuel conservative opposition to the \$130 million (\$76,000) already spent on bilingual education in the state.

The US justice department yesterday said it was poised to weigh into the affirmative action case in California, with President Clinton backing the department's view

that Proposition 209 was in breach of the US constitution.

Oakland education officials insisted, however, that the decision on ebonics was merely intended to underline the legitimacy of black culture, as well as to help African American children learn standard English. Teachers are to receive special training to help them bridge the language gulf.

"When children come to school with whatever language — whether they are Filipino or Chinese or Hispanic — funds are available to support them," said the board president, Lucella Harrison.

"The African American community says: 'Why aren't our students given that money and support, if they are limited to English?'"

But there were fears that the board's radical stance could backfire and erode support for other, clearer-cut programmes. "In one sense, this is all we need," said Jim Lyons, director of the National Association for Bilingual Education. "Whenever bilingual education is raised in this way, there is a backlash."

Although Mr Lyons claimed the decision stemmed from legitimate anger from

members of the black community at the failure of the school system to recognise their culture, he said the linguistic basis of the new ruling was unsound.

"Ebonics is not a separate language, in the way Spanish is, although the rap movement has done a lot to accentuate the diversity in dialects," he said.

The two key differences between black English and standard English, according to linguists, are the use of "be" for a current activity — for example "she be eatin' lunch" — and the use of double negatives for emphasis, as in "I ain't got no food".

Oakland's black mayor, Elihu Harris, disowned the decision, describing ebonics — a combination of "ebony" and "phonics" — as little more than slang. Mr Harris said he had been deluged with telephone calls from business leaders afraid that the board decision would discourage investment.

Norma Gold, who oversees California's distribution of federal money for bilingual teaching, said requests for money for ebonics were unlikely to succeed, and that the scheme would have to be funded from existing budgets.

News in brief

Mystery gunmen threaten to murder Tajikistan hostages

UNDENTIFIED gunmen took 23 people hostage on a highway in Tajikistan yesterday, including seven United Nations military observers and two other UN employees. The kidnapers demanded the release of the brother of a Tajik commander and a safe corridor from the Afghan border to the headquarters of their leader. UN sources said they threatened to kill the hostages and explode 30 bombs in the capital, Dushanbe, unless their demands have been met by tomorrow at 2pm local time. Among the other hostages are members of a Tajik com-

Yeltsin 'back on the bottle'

RUSSIA'S former security chief, Alexander Lebed, said in a television interview yesterday that President Boris Yeltsin had ignored his doctors' advice to avoid alcohol. "He has begun to drink," said Mr Lebed, sacked by Mr Yeltsin as security chief in October. "But he is not permitted to drink." Mr Yeltsin said yesterday he would return to his Kremlin desk on Monday, adding: "The country needs an active and energetic president, especially now." Asked about Mr Lebed's remarks, a spokesman said: "We do not comment on such things." — Reuters.

Chechnia holds 'killers'

Chechen security forces have detained several men suspected of killing six Red Cross workers in the separatist republic on Tuesday. Chechnia's top security official said yesterday. Abu Movsayev refused to say how many people had been detained, name them or say what evidence had implicated them, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. He has accused Russian secret services of organising the killings. — AP.

Jakarta decree

President Suharto, in a decree released by the state secretary yesterday, ordered Indonesians and local companies earning more than 100 million rupiah (\$26,000) a year to donate 2 per cent of their profits to the poor. — Reuters.

Healing process

Germany and the Czech Republic yesterday concluded nearly two years of talks on a joint declaration to heal the wounds between the two countries. The declaration ex-

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سكاف الاصل

Good news for someone else?
Clarke's net legacy to Blair

IF ROBUST economies always won elections then the Conservatives would be half way home by now instead of trailing hopelessly in the polls.

What went wrong for the Government? It is mainly because voters have been deceived too often to take these events at face value.

During the past few years economic policy has been far more responsible. Norman Lamont raised taxes heavily to undo the excesses of the Lawson boom.

Lima's grim message
And Peru has other problems too

IT IS EASY enough to denounce hostage-taking guerrillas — and equally difficult to suggest a rational end to the crisis.

Letters to the Editor

Why the Police Bill bugs us

THE right of every citizen to consult privately with his lawyer is not only a fundamental principle of English law...

We are currently in a constitutional limbo where the criminal justice system has become a key issue in the forthcoming election with both major political parties anxious to outdo the other in their perceived attitude towards serious crime.

subject to legal professional privilege cannot be seized. The Government refuses to allow judicial sanction of these proposed powers...

It is absurd to attack Labour for the system proposed by Michael Howard in the Police Bill these activities were proposed by the public and when there are substantial reasons for suspicion.

IT IS very easy to find examples of powers — and indeed rights — being abused but Meg Henderson seems to think the answer is to do away with them altogether.

A legal framework will not necessarily stop Meg Henderson or anyone else from being bugged. And until there is legislation they will have no means of redress.

expected of them within limits set by Parliament. Labour in general, and Jack Straw in particular, have concentrated on working out the best way to achieve a sensible balance in law.

JACK STRAW places himself in an absurd position. On one hand he writes (Bringing rights home, December 18) that it is the Labour Party's intention to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law in order to make accessible the rights it enshrines.

Enlightenment on what it means to be a Muslim

AS A British "fundamentalist" Muslim, I have begun to fall to be surprised at how right-wing many liberal intellectuals, writing in liberal publications, become when writing about Islam.

The ugly picture of Islam that Catherine Bennett paints is not one that I, or the vast majority of Muslims, recognise. She mixes fact, fiction and uninformed opinion.

"middle path" and rejects extremism of any sort. The "fundamentalism" of Islam teaches that men and women are equal, but different.

MAYBE you could also tell me why your newspaper gives so much space to a distorted attack on one of the world's three great monotheistic religions?

Operating under duress

YOUR article about the woman being compelled to have surgery against her will (Mother vs big brother, December 17) took me back to a dilemma which I, as a senior registrar in psychiatry, and the obstetric team found ourselves in at the Middlesex Hospital just over 30 years ago.

A lady was haemorrhaging internally from an ectopic pregnancy. I was called in to check on her mental state and to decide whether she should be sectioned because she was refusing to have an operation to stop the bleeding which would at the same time necessitate removing the fallopian tube, which has to be done to her that, without the operation, she would bleed to death.

to realise that intense denial can lead to just as much harm to a person's well-being as the face of a medical problem as being psychotic.

Perhaps a national standing forum on health care law and ethics (along the lines of the President's Commission in the US in the 1980s) would provide a more clearly defined and more representative lead, allowing for a continuing and informed debate at the highest level.



Batting for Prince Philip

WHEN a reactionary, aristocratic half-wit is the only major figure to say something sensibly about the problems of Prince Philip, then I'm for royalty every time.

RECALL a character, the Duke of Kabul, who featured in the Hotspur comic. He was served by a faithful Afghan subordinate who laid low his enemies with a cricket bat, a weapon which the attendant called his "cricket-bat".

one another. If the choice is between the authoritarianism of victims and moralists, and the robust common sense of Prince Philip, then I'm for royalty every time.

Discharge from Sellafield

YOU report (Sellafield storm over plan to increase discharges, December 17) that BNFL plans a "huge increase" in discharges from its Thorp plant.

charge limit to accommodate that. The total overall discharges from Thorp will be unchanged.

Another crop on the famine

THAT Britain was responsible for the genocide in Ireland seems to me not a Sinn Féin view of history but common sense.

THE SIMPLE point is that, in the 1940s, no government anywhere in the world had a clear idea of how to deal with a major famine.

A Country Diary

NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE: The temperature was above freezing, but the duck dump had entered our bones.

by blackbirds and fieldfares. The need for food and shelter makes for active birds even in the most dismal of days.

A tactful suggestion for the royal gaffer



AT the risk of giving offence, it seems clear to me that the theme of the week has been fact. The Duke of Edinburgh — a septuagenarian whose two main hobbies have been shooting and shooting his mouth off — appeared at Birmingham in the Dunblane murder victims and their sympathisers by tactlessly declaring that, if you are going to ban handguns, you might as well lock up cricket bats, another potentially lethal sporting implement.

perhaps that breezy sub-clause ("which he could do very easily") which takes the comment beyond social brick-dropping to suicidal gaucherie.

The serious public gaffe nearly always involves a metaphor. The late Nicholas Ridley was pilloried for describing an accident-prone colleague as "sailing with his bow doors open" shortly after the Herald of Free Enterprise ferry had sunk in such circumstances.

behaviour of press, government, food industry and, alas, during a national health scare. Now it seems highly unlikely that relatives of any of the people who have died recently from CJD would have been able to watch this play.

for example, you had lost relatives in the Pan Am 103 or the A30 disasters, I doubt that you could ever watch Airplane again — but should that movie be banned in perpetuity from the BBC?

Finally, it is possible to feel a shred of sympathy for the Duke in that the week of his own imposition has seen the simultaneous apotheosis of another of Britain's ambassadors.

Handwritten text at the bottom of the page: "سكوت الامم"

Bangladesh's story written in blood

Commentary
Martin Woollacott

THE ROAD from the Indian border to Faridpur in Bangladesh is a long necklace of battered farms, on which villages are closely strung like beads. Every half mile or so, among the green of paddy field and coconut grove, there is a scatter of huts, with beaten earth paths to each doorway, or the clutter of beehive shaps with tea, grain, and soap laid out on open boards, that marks a larger settlement.

of every age, the more senior calling out suggestions as to wording while the more junior fixed on the visitors an unwavering Bengal stare. When the document was finished, and after a suitably large envelope for it had, with some difficulty, been located, it was ceremoniously handed to me. As I put it in my bag, there was an audible gasp of satisfaction from the villagers. There was nothing in the letter that the world did not, in a general way, already know, yet, as it was passed to me, the weight of this village's simple expectation that justice would be done was passed on as well.

on Pakistani auxiliaries. The car, bumping down narrow unlit lanes, brought us eventually to a muddy piece of open ground between shuttered stalls. It was absolutely empty except for the dead body of a young man who had been recently shot in the chest. He was good looking and well made, dressed in a khaki military shirt and trousers, a middle class boy of perhaps 22. Bodies seen at a distance or contorted and thrown about are one thing, but this was a strange moment of intimacy of a very dif-

ferent kind. We stood over him like mourners. For a second or two I saw him as his mother, father, or sister would have seen him, as a loved one lost and gone, his male beauty wasted in the dirt. I had not fully understood, till then, the price that Bangladesh was paying. But it did not stop being paid. Earlier that year, I had spent two days in a Mukti Bahini camp on the border commanded by Captain Najmul Huda. He discussed the war with us over an open air dinner before sending us into Bangladesh on what was called a firing party. In his

Death of an era



Martin Kettle

RAPHAEL Samuel's funeral in Highgate Cemetery this week seemed more than just the funeral of a very remarkable man who has died far too early, at the age of 61. It seemed almost like the funeral of a way of thinking and a wake for an era of the human spirit. To those of us who do not believe in resurrection, it had a kind of wider finality.

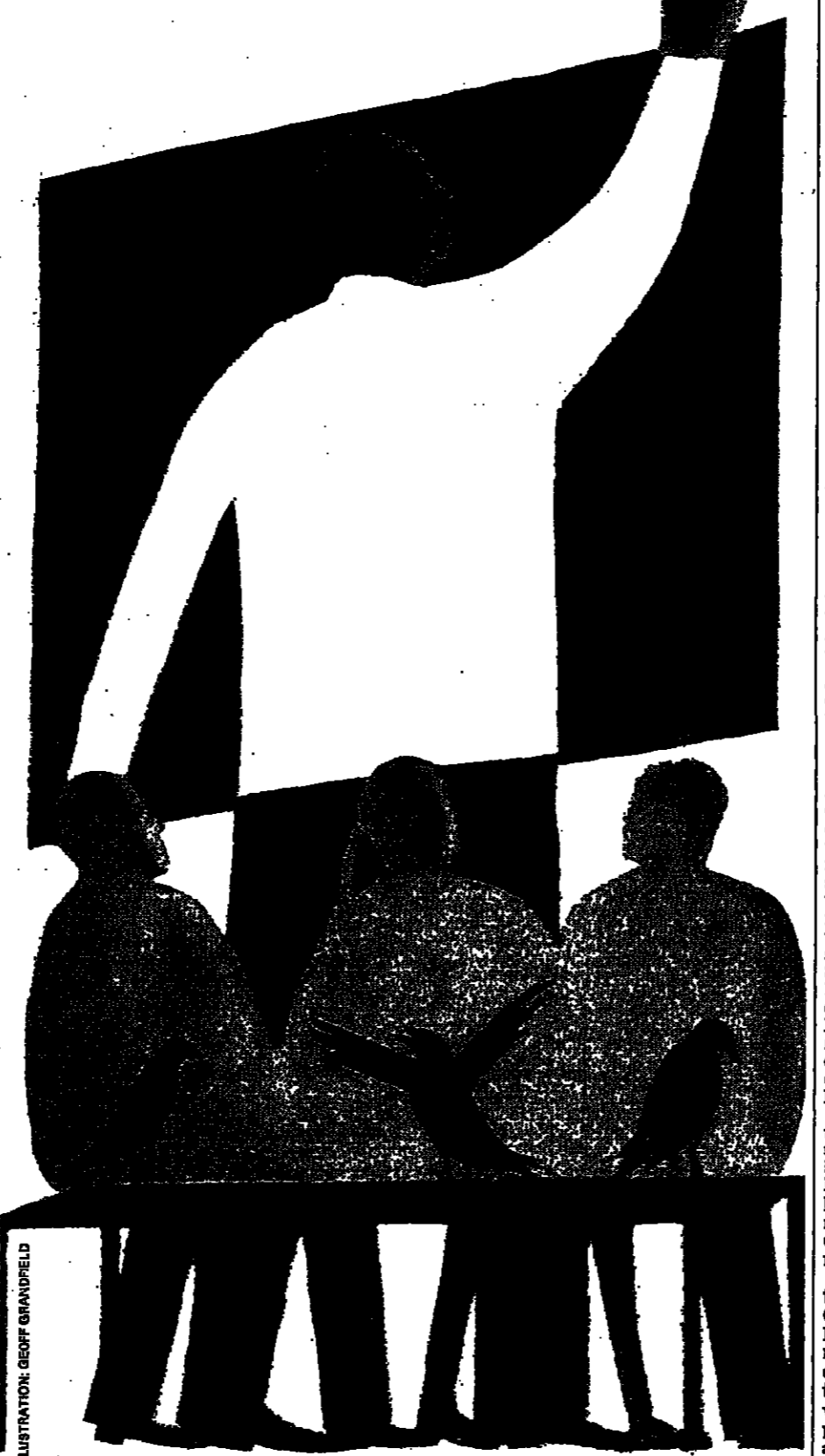
Figures from what was once the New Left bent nervously to lift his coffin

And yet that's just it. We cannot honestly sing such songs now. We remember the words and they move us greatly, but I don't think many people believe in them any more. A new Jerusalem? Pardon me while I turn my New Labour eyes to the wall, England Arise? The long march of the dispossessed towards a society of all for all, though he was hugely interested in both. He loved people's memories and inheritances, yours, mine, his own, everyone's. Through his work in the Ruskin History Workshop, he was, in spite of his apparent aversion to his own celebrity, the presiding genius of the modern reclamation of the day before yesterday. That book of your district in old photographs is his legacy, just as much as the more learned books of his own that he never quite seemed to finish.

School's out, forever

Do your children exist solely to shop, or sit slavishly in front of a computer? Neil Postman argues that schooling needs a whole new rationale if it is to survive

IN CONSIDERING how to conduct the schooling of our young, adults have two problems to solve: one of them is an engineering problem; the other a metaphysical one. The engineering problem is essentially a technical one. It is the problem of the means by which the young will become learned. It addresses the issues of where and when things will be done, and how learning is supposed to occur. The problem is not a simple one. It requires some knowledge of applied psychology, group dynamics, the structure of subjects, and practical experience. Any self-respecting teacher will have some ideas about how to solve this problem.



that would give point to education. And here I should like to suggest two possibilities. The first, I call the story of the Spaceship Earth. This is the story of human beings as stewards of the Earth, caretakers of a vulnerable space capsule. It is a relatively new narrative, not fully developed, but it is a story that evokes in young people a sense of responsibility and commitment. And it is a story that has the power to bind people. It makes the idea of racism both irrelevant and ridiculous, and it makes clear the interdependence of human beings and their need for solidarity. If any part of the spaceship is poisoned, then all suffer;

The story, as it is told in various places and forms, is essentially as follows: if perfection is to be found anywhere in the universe, it is assumed to exist in God. There may have been a time when human beings were perfect, but at some point, for various reasons, their powers were diminished, so that they were forced to live forever in a state of imperfect understanding. Indeed, for us to believe that we are godlike, or perfect, is among the most serious sins of which we are capable. The Greeks called the sin "hubris". The Christians call it "pride". Scientists call it "dogmatism".

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Canny operator... Geoff Mulcahy, who has been accused of being "cautious to the point of corporate inactivity" likes to deliberate over his decisions. PHOTOGRAPH: Gary Wessler

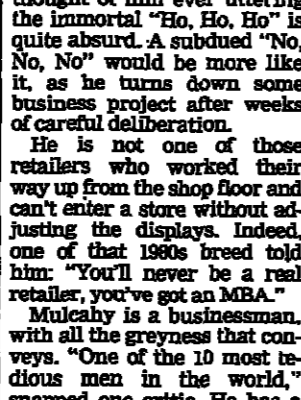
A workhorse glad to be grey

Reputations

ROGER COWE on the man who played Santa at Woolworth's

GEOFF MULCAHY is the nearest the business world gets to Father Christmas. As chief executive of the Kingfisher group he is in charge of Woolworth, which takes a tenth of its £1.4 billion annual turnover in Christmas week, selling 10.5 per cent of Britain's toys, 14.5 per cent of this Christmas's CDs, tapes and videos, and a fair chunk of festive chocolates. Yet Mulcahy is about as far as you can get from a jolly

Kingfisher takes flight



computer systems," he says. "And the staff need to feel important. If they don't, the business won't run properly." In the 1980s, when Ralph Halpern, Terence Couran and George Davies bestrode the high street, greyness seemed a disadvantage. But Kingfisher's management controlled expansion in the good times and when recession came was still plodding along while Burton, Storehouse and Next courted bankruptcy. Then Woolworth went haywire at Christmas 1994, DIY market leader B&Q suffered

Mulcahy's way with figures

THE struggling Woolworth chain was bought in 1982 by a financial consortium. Fateroster, which injected a new team including Geoff Mulcahy as finance director. Mulcahy moved up to chief executive in 1984. He oversaw the rapid expansion of B&Q and acquired Comet. In 1986 he faced a takeover bid from Dixons which was narrowly defeated. The Superdrug chain was acquired and the

fact that, damn it all, the chap's not a retailer. He shows a trace of irritation at this: "What is a retailer? A lot of businesses have been built by personalities. But you have to have the ability to translate ideas into something that works. "I don't go along with the personality cult, but I have tried to build a business and manage it profitably. It needs a high degree of professionalism, but you have to have a love of the business." He would probably be as enthusiastic about running a ball-bearing plant, an oil company or a sugar factory — which is what he did, at Esso, Norton Abrasives and British Sugar before becoming part of the team which bought Woolworth in 1982.

Shareholders are bleeding companies dry

IAM struck by the weaknesses rather than the strengths of British industry. The balance of payments is pretty dire and I worry that it is not only negative in manufacturing but in services as well. The Government white paper on competitiveness was right. The challenge is to raise the level of under-achievers to the level of the best in the world. But the Government has no plans to do that. British companies underperform on training so why are there no inducements to improve? I would go for a modern levy/grant system to fund more training.

There are some good performers but in too many areas we're dependent on imports, and UK-based companies lack large market share. This should be a top priority for any government. One of the challenges going into the millennium is to tackle the shareholders who bleed too much money from companies. That means lowering the rate of return and encouraging investment in people and in new equipment. We also have to get away from old adversarial attitudes. Employers and company directors could start by realising that huge pay increases are perceived as demoralising and cynical by employees.

Flexibility has become a strength

ONE of the main strengths of British industry that has become apparent in the past few years is the more flexible use of labour — and that is particularly good news in an upturn. Companies are much more aware of training and development needs for the work force and seem to be spending more money on training, so they are getting better value out of staff. But our members have clear concerns about the education system and the quality of people companies have to work with.

Evaluation in 1992 was against a background of recession but exports went up and imports didn't grow as quickly, so now we are optimistic whereas 10 to 15 years ago we were depressed. Dealing with devaluation may not be a weakness, but how industry will respond to the appreciation of sterling could be. Although the productivity gap between Britain and other countries has narrowed, one short-term weakness of manufacturing through this recovery is weak investment. It is a worry that if investment is not high enough we will not get the supply, and that could lead to capacity constraints.

Euro Eye

UNE of the questions France's president Jacques Chirac will have to chew on over Christmas is who to appoint to the Banque de France's monetary council. Two of the nine-strong council responsible for setting French interest rates have to be reappointed or replaced by the beginning of January.

The process is being watched with particular interest by the financial markets and is apparently proving complicated because the three men who have the job of nominating would-be members are divided. Under the present struc-

Mark Milner

The decision on who to appoint to the council will be seen as a key policy signal. According to an analysis by the French bank, Paribas, the nine-strong council is dominated by those who believe in the tough policy of the *franc fort* and the interest policy needed to sustain the franc's position against the German mark. Paribas reckons six of the council are hawks, two are doves and one is described as neutral to dovish.

That has kept the balance of power within the council firmly in favour of the *franc fort*, despite pressures within France for a softer currency stance. Critics of the *franc fort* argue that allowing the cur-

Chirac seeking flexible friends

German commentators are already critical for example, of the French pressure to build more "flexibility" into the stability which is meant to ensure post-monetary and would be quick to pounce on any further evidence of French backsliding. Mr Chirac is unlikely to find the alternatives politically appealing. One would be to tackle the problem head on. According to a number of economists, however, that would require a thorough reform of the labour market.

Another, perhaps the most likely, would be to try to soldier on and hope the economy picks up sufficiently to dent the jobless total — though French patience may prove limited. Perhaps the best Mr Chirac can hope for is a Christmas present from the Americans in the form of a stronger dollar. That would help both the Germans and the French on the currency and interest rate fronts.

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Imro levies record compensation sum over fund-management scandal - with hefty fine still to come

Morgan must pay £200m

Patrick Donovan
City Editor

UP TO 90,000 investors in unit trusts operated by former Morgan Grenfell fund manager Peter Young stand to receive about £200 million in the biggest compensation programme ever ordered by City regulators.

The running of three investment trusts which led to the sacking of Mr Young. The 38-year-old Oxford graduate is under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office over his alleged role in establishing a secret web of companies in which funds placed with Morgan Grenfell trusts were invested. Five other senior managers have been sacked over the affair.

The eventual bill for Morgan Grenfell seems certain to rise further as the Deutsche Bank subsidiary faces the prospect of a huge fine from Imro for infringing its rules. Analysts speculated yesterday that the cost to Deutsche for rehabilitating the reputation of one of Britain's leading

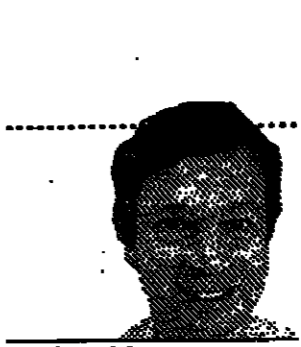
fund managers could reach £500 million. This is because the £200 million compensation package comes on top of the £180 million spent by Deutsche Bank to bail out Morgan Grenfell by buying back undated securities held in funds operated by Mr Young.

Any investor with money held in European funds operated by the "rogue" manager between August 1, 1995 and September 5 this year will qualify for compensation. The aim is to give investors the difference between the money they earned from the troubled Morgan Grenfell trusts and the average return from comparable funds.

Morgan Grenfell fund and the investment return provided by a specially compiled index of comparable funds from Mirocrol data. In addition, Morgan Grenfell will be paying interest on the compensation payments.

Notebook

Busy regulators earn their keep



Edited by Mark Milner

THESSE are busy times for Britain's utilities regulators. Yesterday Ofwat (telecommunications) argued its powers in the High Court; Ofwat (water) criticised eight water-only companies for non-compliance with its guidelines, and Railtrack's regulator, John Swift, castigated the company because of its failure to keep up with its infrastructure spending timetable.

which they are based are "in" or "out".

The clock is ticking. The Bank of England, for example, warned British banks in May that they needed to make sure that their wholesale operations, if not the retail side of the business (the one that deals with you and me), was prepared for EMU. Even in France and Germany, however, some banks are only now commissioning "impact studies", which can take several months to carry out, to decide what actions they need to take.

As a result, information technology companies with expertise in the field are suddenly finding that demand for their services has taken off. For them Christmas started at the beginning of the month.

This is just the sort of demand/supply uncertainty for which innovative products were designed. Enter then a Swedish bank which has taken out what amounts to a futures contract with the computer services company Cap Gemini - effectively buying in advance a guarantee of sufficient Cap Gemini's resources to ensure that its systems will be ready for monetary union. Could there be scope for a secondary market?

BT loses watchdog challenge

Nicholas Bannister on the High Court's landmark ruling for utilities regulation

BITISH Telecom's attempt to curb the powers of industry regulator Don Cruickshank was thrown out yesterday by the High Court in a landmark decision for utilities regulation.

tional facilities licences to US companies earlier this week, would be "helpful" in persuading US authorities that there were no competition barriers to BT's planned £14 billion takeover of MCI.

BT said it had spent "well under £1 million" challenging the legality of Mr Cruickshank's action. It had earlier said it was taking legal action because it was in the interest of public and shareholders that the extent of the regulator's powers should be determined.

Mr Cruickshank said yesterday's ruling ended a period of uncertainty for the telecommunications industry. He would be including the fair trading conditions in the licences of other operators.

The judges rejected claims that Mr Cruickshank had usurped the authority of the Trade and Industry Secretary and the Monopolies Commission and that the new clause was not sufficiently specific and could be used to break up its telecom network.

They dismissed as "absurd" a claim by BT's QC, Roger Henderson, that the wording of the new clause meant it could have an effect outside the telecom industry for which Mr Cruickshank had responsibility.

The judges said that it plainly applied to people as "users of telecom services". Mr Cruickshank has been frustrated by the long draw-out procedures for dealing with allegations of anti-competitive behaviour by BT, and wanted a swifter method of dealing with complaints.



On the waterfront... the sacked Liverpool dockers picketing the port gates

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCPHEE

Sacked dockers reject offer

MARTYN HAINES
Northern Industrial Correspondent

THE MERSEY dockers sacked 15 months ago yesterday threatened the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company with an international boycott after overwhelmingly rejecting their former employer's final peace offer.

against accepting a pay and jobs package offering £28,000 to 326 former MDHC employees, sacked after refusing to cross another company's picket line. They were also offered the chance to apply for up to 40 jobs in the port.

After the mass meeting in Liverpool, dockers' leaders said the men remained determined that all 500 people sacked - including those dismissed by other port employers - should be given the

chance of work. The rejection will mean unrelenting picketing at dock gates. Dockers' leaders will call for an international boycott of the port of Liverpool on January 20.

1,200 Scots get job shock for Christmas

Colin Weston
Industrial Correspondent

AMISERABLE Christmas is in store for more than 1,200 workers in Scotland who were yesterday made redundant or told their jobs were under threat.

Sleghorn Ellingsen, managing director, said: "I very much regret having to make this announcement on the eve of the Christmas and New Year holidays. We have delayed as long as we possibly could, because we had hoped to clinch a major order." The strength of the pound was not helping the yard's international competitiveness, he said.

Govan is completing work on a mission control command vessel for commercial satellites and has recently won an order for a 36,000-tonne chemical carrier to be delivered in March 1998, but it has no other orders.

Staff at Crawfords, founded in 1895, were warned after the firm went into receivership in September that a decision would have to be taken on job losses before Christmas.

Economy in best shape for a generation, says Clarke

Charlotte Denny

CHANCELLOR Kenneth Clarke boasted yesterday that the economy will enter the latest round of tax cuts and the promise of windfall gains for building society account holders.

worried about the inflationary implications of consumer spending continually outstripping the growth rate of the economy. They fear this trend will be accentuated by the latest round of tax cuts and the promise of windfall gains for building society account holders.

Despite these concerns, separate figures from the ONS showed that robust consumer demand has not yet caused the problems for the balance of payments that have delayed previous recoveries.

The current account crept back into the red in the third quarter with a deficit of £100 million, but the deterioration was the result of a decline in investment income, rather than a surge in imported goods.

Newbury bypass cement deal cracks Tarmac's green facade

Sam King

TARMAC, the self-styled "green" construction group, is supplying concrete to the controversial Newbury bypass, despite insisting earlier this year that it would not be involved with the project in the absence of strict environmental standards.

react to this news with a good deal of alarm.

However, a spokesman for Tarmac insisted that the company had never ruled out being involved in the Newbury project, and that as a subcontractor it was only playing a minor part in the scheme.

He said Sir John had only promised to ask the Highways Agency to ensure the road was built to high environmental standards.

"We thought we had a good record, but when environmentalists started attacking our signs we realised we had not done such a good job promoting it."

News in brief

Risk of gas supply cuts

The gas industry regulator warned last night that there was a greater risk of customer interruptions on interruptible contracts - including power stations and hospitals - being cut off this winter, adding to fears that cold weather and increased demand could hit energy supplies.

Premier profits

Premier Farnell will make a profit of £70 million on the sale of its volume electronic services business to Arrow Electronics for \$300 million (£182 million).

Rocco's rest

Sir Rocco Forte is in the running to open a 200-bedroom hotel on London's Trafalgar Square, opposite the National Gallery. He also plans to open a luxury hotel in Cardiff.

Amec buys

Amec, the engineering and construction group, is to pay £20 million-£25 million for a stake in Spie Batignolles, a French electrical group, paving the way for a merger that could make it Europe's sixth-biggest contractor.

Fate of power firm in balance

Chris Barrie and Lina Saigol

THE fate of Northern Electric hung in the balance last night as the Takeover Panel allowed American predator CE Electric to delay until midnight the outcome of its \$782 million hostile bid.

The delay, granted at the request of the American utility, extended the bid period for seven hours amid indications that shareholders were evenly divided over the merits of the 650p-a-share offer.

There was speculation in the City that the delay meant the bid had run into difficulties. Sources also suggested there may have been problems concerning the returns from the large number of small shareholders in the north of England.

Two years ago Trafalgar House failed to buy the Newcastle-based firm.

CE Electric, owned by Nebraska-based CalEnergy and Peter Kiewit Sons, has already bought close to 30 per cent of the company and has announced for another 4 per cent.

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Finance Guardian

Manufacturing a revolution

Is British industry back? Guardian writers and photographer **Don McPhee** have been finding out. **Simon Beavis** opens a series of reports and representative voices assess **The Real Picture**



Industrial hot spot... flasks containing used nuclear fuel cool down for five years before uranium and plutonium is reprocessed at Sellafield

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCPHEE

IT HAS been Conservative Party orthodoxy that in the past 17 years Britain has begun to arrest 100 years of economic decline. Read any one of the three white papers on competitiveness produced by Michael Heseltine and that is the clear subtext. Prepare to hear a lot more of it ahead of the election.

But for all the radical changes brought in by the Government during the 1980s — from privatisation to trade union reform to opening the flood gates for inward investment — the claim is disingenuous, as most manufacturers will testify. It is only relatively recently — since the fall of Margaret Thatcher — that Tory politicians realised they could no longer pretend manufacturing didn't matter.

Yet that was the overarching belief which formed industrial policy in the Thatcher years. The future lay in the service sector. Industry was an increasing irrelevance.

This attitude — which was lapped up with arrogant certainty in the City and translated into a damaging short-termism — left British industry as bereft and battered as would any regime of powerful trade union rights or nationalisation.

It has left Britain, with a

new century approaching, caught in fundamental debates which in a more rational economy would be seen as an indulgence. Like how to stimulate essential investment in industry — the CBI promises for next year one of the most significant investigations into Britain's poor investment record.

Or like the telling complacency underlying the presumption that because the trade deficit in manufacturing goods is now forecast to be only £8 billion in 1997 — just under half of its 1989 peak — everything is somehow all right.

The context has begun to change, however. The election campaign will see both main political parties vying vigorously for the business vote. Every time the Conservatives draw on an OECD survey showing Britain topping the growth league of the G7 countries, Labour will point to other evidence showing that Britain has slumped from 13th to 18th in the world prosperity ratings, behind Hong Kong and Singapore.

But one important fact remains: John Major could not have made the slightest claim to speak for this constituency unless attitudes within his party had shifted.

Next week, the Guardian begins a series on the new turn to page 10, column 7

We need to apply our technology

OUR international companies are highly competitive. But there's a long tail of smaller companies who are less good and that's a weakness. One strength is our good fundamental research, but we are less good at applied technology. We need to get big and

smaller companies together to push technology through the system: small companies can often apply technology more quickly, particularly information technology and particularly in the service sector, because fundamental research needs to be better applied in the market.

Another strength is that the UK is beginning to show it understands labour markets and how to use them more effectively.

We have some very forward-looking unions, too, who understand they are operating in a totally changed world and with good companies who understand the value of partnership that bodes well for the future.

More professional management, with people who've been trained for their job, combined with greater employee involvement, more responsibility devolved and better communications are all significant changes which have occurred in recent years.

The challenge for the millennium is that businesses will be market driven. Companies will have to know how to respond quickly and appropriately to customers worldwide who will buy their products and services.

And businesses will have to know how to build and manage their reputation as effectively as they build market share; how to create a feeling that a company is good at responding to customers but is also a company which can be trusted.

Sir David Simon, chairman of BP

Long grey tail of low standards

IT TAKES three years to turn around an economic deficit, seven for a technology deficit, and 20 for a skills and attitude deficit. Twenty years ago our country was suffering from an attitude deficit with high taxes, poor industrial relations and poor focus on customer service. It was very difficult to do business here.

Today loss-making industries are no longer a burden on the taxpayer. We have an improving infrastructure for competitiveness including lower telecoms, steel and energy prices.

At their best, UK companies are as good as any in the world. But there is a long grey tail of poorly performing small- and medium-sized companies. Turning these around will be a tough challenge.

In our business, the motor industry, the Japanese take the need to improve the performance of suppliers very seriously. Western companies have a more variable attitude. Doing better takes time. The City still pushes companies to look to the short term, though there is an increasing number of fund managers who take a long-term view.

Improvements also need everyone to be involved. If an employee finds a faulty part,

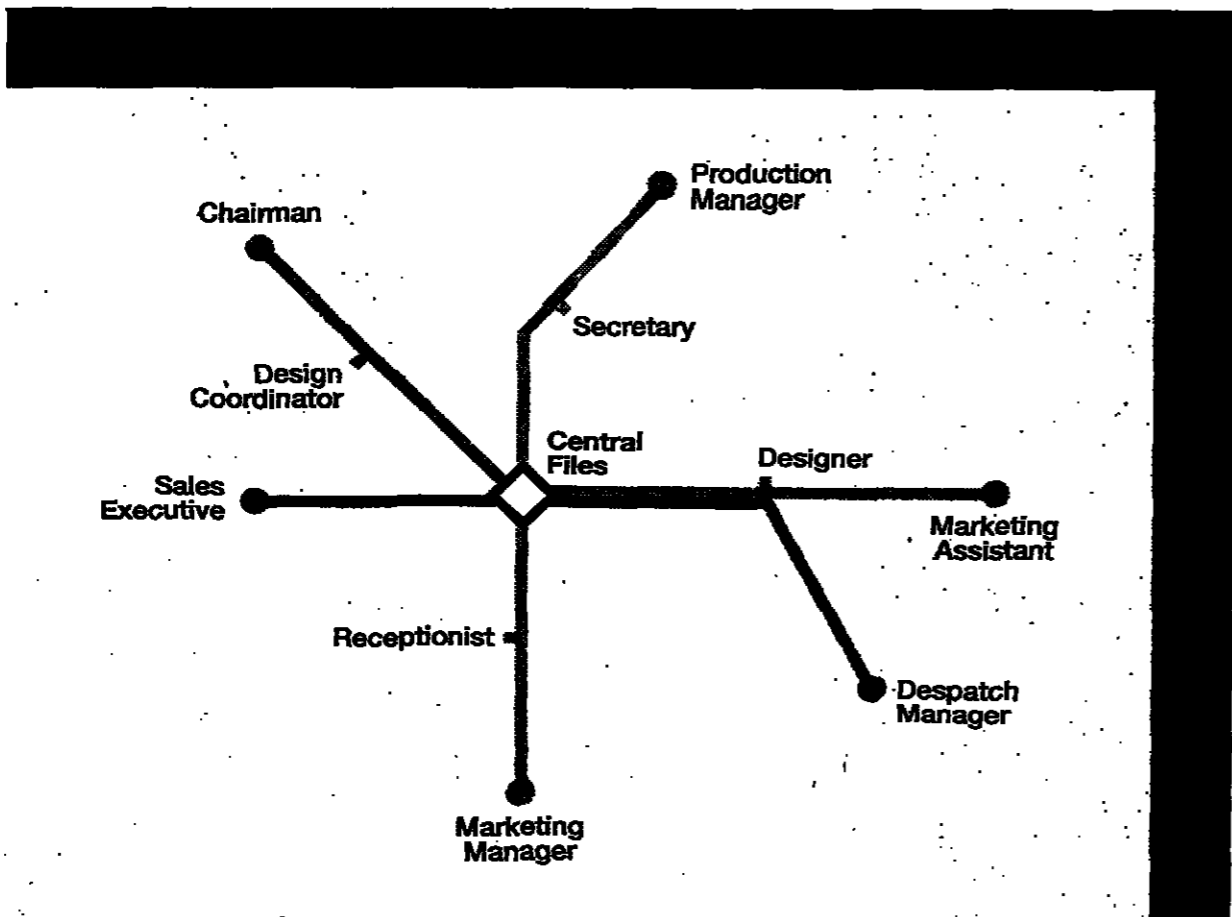
he can throw it away and still make his target production number for the day. If he looks for the root cause, it may involve several people and take several man-days. There is a short-term cost, but in the long run all these incremental gains in quality and productivity give a company an unassailable position. It is a question of philosophy.

Compared with Germany, France and Italy, we are in much better shape. The Europeans used to laugh at us. Now they are privatising industry, cutting taxes and trying to introduce flexibility.

There are two big challenges facing the British government. The quality of secondary education is a very serious threat to industry's ability to remain competitive in global markets.

The health service is the other major challenge. It must become more efficient, and learn how to do 50 per cent more for 50 per cent less cost. The key is to focus on the non-value-adding parts of the NHS — and that doesn't mean closing wards or losing staff.

John Neill, group chief executive, The Unipart Group



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Thriving small firms hold key

FEEL more optimistic than have for many years. The fundamental problems still remain. Inadequate investment in training, woefully inadequate investment in state of the art machinery and in the development of new products and processes — and on top of this we still lack a supportive capital structure.

However, I meet increasing numbers of small and medium-sized companies which have had the aspiration, drive and tenacity to establish worldwide positions and leadership in niche markets. It is on these hidden champions that the country's economic future lies.

It has been our failure to grow small business into large that is the root cause of our decline, coupled with a hangover of a very strong anti-manufacturing culture. There is still too little provision of start-up finance and almost no long-term finance.

Small companies rely on overdrafts and there is little risk capital on offer. Sadly there is no sign of change and four out of five small businesses which start up fail within five years.

Nevertheless, I can now produce examples of manufacturing companies in every region which have proven their ability to take on the toughest world competition and win.

Two other trends give me cheer. Firstly the impact of Far Eastern inward investment on the supply chain has forced more suppliers to adopt standards and consistency of quality which are prerequisites to any company being world class.

Secondly in our largest companies we are developing a number of significant world class champions.

I believe the decline in our manufacturing industries has been arrested. I know we could reverse the trend and instead of producing the same at lower and lower cost, share in the growth of world de-

mand for the new and improved. The question remains, however, do we have enough entrepreneurs, managers and work forces with the aspiration and determination to lead the world?

Sir John Harvey-Jones, former ICI chairman

Quick Crossword No. 8315

V A F T
K I N G C O B R A
P R H S I A
J O B Y A S E M B L E R
F U O I L E R
A P P O A L I M P I D
A B
O D I O U S R U N W A Y
D O E D F
R P T I E B I N
R A A I L B
C R O C O D I L E
T E E

Solution No. 8314

- Across**
- 1 Perimeter (13)
 - 8 Airke (7)
 - 9 Scrimp (6)
 - 10 Heap (4)
 - 11 Clergyman's address (6)
 - 13 In foreign parts (6)
 - 14 Attitude — taken by golfers? (6)
 - 17 It's not a positive — denial (3)
 - 19 Let it stand (4)
 - 21 Perfect (3)

- Down**
- 1 Lettuce — Greek isle (3)
 - 2 Walker — or a climber (7)
 - 3 Unshifty (4)
 - 4 Blacksmith perhaps — not making good money (6)
 - 5 Relations — may be paid (3)
 - 6 Artless (5)
 - 7 Advantageous rather than just (3)

- 10 Bringer of lawsuit (3)
- 12 Spanish lace veil (3)
- 15 Unaffected (7)
- 16 Slender (5)
- 18 Lacking experience — on the golf course? (5)
- 20 Adjoin (4)
- 23 Non-professional — balled (3)

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Saturday December 21 1996

The Guardian

the week

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standards



Brian Keenan found out what it is to be a prisoner of ethnic conflicts in Beirut. But he did not need to go that far. He could have stayed in Belfast, the city of his birth. A place brave enough to escape its past?

A hostage of history

THERE'S an Indian chief-tain hanging around the back streets of Belfast, if you know where to look for him. I wasn't sure if he would still be there. I remember my father walking me hand in hand through the great sombre mill houses and grain stores that marked out Belfast's dockland. Not far from these were the bulky but bland commercial offices of the shippers and importers. Their bulk and weight seemed awesome to my seven-year-old mind. I was glad of my father's reassuring hand, but I was still intimidated about going to see the Indian chieftain. "You see, up there," said my father, pointing to a great stone face that looked out from one side of an arched gateway. I looked at the huge face becoming bigger as my father hoisted me on to his shoulders. Though I was now nine feet tall the face still stared down at me. The warrior's head was massive. The streets were thronged as I walked down Royal Avenue towards the area, where, as a child 40 years ago, I had stood with my father. It was November, and the

early Christmas shoppers were mingling with the lunch-time office workers and shop assistants scuttling in and out of various bars and cafés. The sense of bustle and pre-Christmas cheer had not dispelled my anxiety. The city's peace was fragile and looked mockingly towards the season of peace and goodwill. But I thought, that's the nature of this city, it thrives and survives on nervous energy. As if 26 years of the Troubles had become a routine of electric-shock therapy that the citizens barely noticed, yet which they couldn't live without, like some kind of hideous addiction. Had my old Indian been bulldozed out of existence like so many other parts of inner-city Belfast? I noticed the Albert Clock, a 60-ft high replica of Big Ben, as it struck two o'clock. It looked like the whole structure was leaning to the right. I crossed the road to check. Sure enough, the famous old clock was doing just that. Time was leaning to the right, just as the various political groupings in the city were taking up more entrenched and threatening


The Crown, Belfast... good best comes before bad news
PHOTOGRAPHS: KEVIN BOYSE/GENS THORPE
positions. I thought I'd found the building with my old Red Indian, the giant reddish-brown facade of which was now sadly dilapidated and beyond repair. My eyes scanned it. There was the Ethiopian's head surrounded by pomegranates. He had fat lips and a flat nose, and huge ears with earrings that a gymnast could swing from. Beside him was an Indian, but not a Red Indian. Pineapples, grapes, and pumpkins surrounded him. He had black eyes and huge flowing whiskers and his lips were pursed in a kiss. There was an eastern sultan beside him crowned with a majestic turban. I had forgotten about all these faces and was suddenly remembering them as my eyes danced urgently towards my Indian chieftain. His headdress of feathers lay back into the stone as though a wind was blowing through them. He had a long nose and set mouth, but his eyes were huge and soft. I looked at them, half realising why after 40 years I had **page 14**

NATIONAL SAVINGS
Investment Ideas

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I'VE JUST HAD A SMALL WINDFALL and plan to treat my wife to the holiday of a lifetime in the spring of '98 - our silver wedding anniversary. In the meantime I want to invest the money and get a really good return. Any ideas?

C Burney
ALDERSHOT



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NATIONAL SAVINGS
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HJ1GD6

the week that was

Them on them

The global view
FRANTIC parents are forking over anywhere from \$300 to \$1,250 to bring home 'Tickle Me Elmo'...

IN Poland a guest is supposed to arrive, eat and drink as commanded. To this end the Polish language has invented a host of tests to facilitate imbibing large amounts of undiluted alcohol...

Us on us

The British view
Sport's worst-kept secret came officially out into the open as Wembley was named as the venue of Britain's new \$180 million National Stadium...

The town hall that brought you the million missing bricks and 720 missing mowers and garden tools...

horrific ritual of getting on a first name basis called a Brumderschaft...

THE Ministry of Communications is inviting individuals and companies to come up with a slogan for the Icelandic tourism industry...

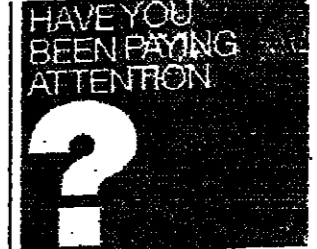
den tools, has managed another great disappearing trick. Lambeth Council sleuths now have to grapple with the curious case of the garages gone walkabout...

Stray dogs in west Berkshire are to be implanted with a microchip containing information about their identities...



THEME OF THE WEEK TURKEYS

Light as a feather, dark as night... The turkey is a symbol of good luck and good wishes...



- 1. Which lover of the blues is sending the Spice Girls a Christmas card?
2. Left Scepterman isn't sending the Spice Girls a Christmas card. Why?
3. 'There has been a full and frank debate in the Blair household'...

MP who was economical with the bed

This week last year December 19, 1995

A YEAR ago, David Ashby took the Sunday Times to court to clear his name after allegations of homosexuality...



Unhappy families... David and Silvana
disgusted the liberals, as one of six Tory MPs on the select committee who voted against a handgun ban...

Ashby surprisingly confirmed the bed-sharing, but said it was an economy. The story could have disappeared, but because Ashby took it to court...

donned a mask he wears at night for his amnesia, suggesting this would bar homosexual activity...

tried to contact him several times, Mrs Ashby has said, 'but he never returns my calls'...

field porters - love the Queen Mum and bash the queers, he said of the local party...

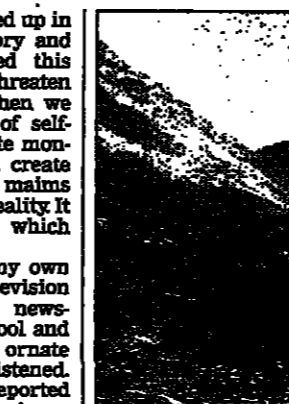
Silvana Ashby's 'secretarial' salary paid from her husband's £42,000 office costs allowance...

- 4. Who was described as 'little grub'?
5. Tony Blair told Des O'Connor he once tried to run away. What was his supposed destination?
6. 'Whatever happened we would have won'...

A hostage of history

4 page 13 remembered this face rather than the others. As I walked away I could only think how imponderable, yet accepting and understanding...

knowledge that I was snared up in that peculiar net of history and identity that has plagued this town...



felt that by repeating the phrase 'not too bad' often enough, it interposed a veil of selfishness between himself and the suffering...

Brian Keenan... caught up in the struggles of nations
I strolled up through this 'loyalist ghetto', I was intrigued by a simple cameo of life that confronted me...

new analysis. There can be no going back... Sure there still are neurotics and psychopaths out there...

Quiz answers

- 1. Mrs Thatcher, who was touched to be called the original Spice Girl.
2. Because she claims the Spice Girls 'Say You'll Be There' plagiarises her Hellaween pop anthem 'Come To Me'...

I returned to my hotel and read an article in the Irish Times in which the journalist was commenting on the 'morality' of paramilitarism...

I was feeling alien in my own city in the bar, the television behind me announced a newsflash. I turned towards the long marble bar to my amazement...

renewing itself along ancient and unstable fault lines. I told him about the old Albert Clock tilting sideways...

It was like hearing my Red Indian speak.
ONE of the most notable things to me each time I arrive back in Belfast is the luxurious ease with which people swear...

I was going to visit Jackie Redpath, who has been working in the Shankill community long before it became internationally famous...

There are things being discussed that the press never hears about, and that are ongoing. It's a vision, there is hope.

How you rate
0-4 Don't say
5-9 Splendid
10-14 Wise man (or woman)
15 Angel

صلى الله عليه وسلم

An author at four, the future of university student Ruth Davies seven years on is bright, to put it mildly

Eleven into 147 will go

THE JOANNA COLES INTERVIEW

"HELLO, would you like to know the definition of a second?" Ruth Davies demands, and before I can sit down, she is telling me anyway: "It's 9,192,631,770 cycles of radiation, um, corresponding to the transition between the two hyperfine levels of the ground state of the caesium 133 atom!"

"I didn't know there was a definition of a second," remarks her older sister Katie from the sofa, where she is absently nursing her four-week-old baby.

"Well, there's a definition of almost everything, isn't there?" says Ruth's mother.

Uh-oh, I haven't even taken my coat off yet, what have I stumbled into, I think bleakly, wondering how best to approach an 11-year-old girl bursting with an IQ of 147. From under her jagged fringe she gives a short, shy smile.

Ruth Davies smiled properly the day after she was born. Seven months later she started talking. "More chow," those were her first words," her mother giggles. Ruth started word-processing aged two.

At the age of four she wrote a book called *My Little Duck*. On the back she wrote *Other Titles By This Author Include . . .* The sequel was called *And Susie Wanted This*. "I thought that was a strange title," says Mrs Davies. "Well, they call books things like that, don't they," says Ruth, tidy in her school uniform of grey jumper, trousers and bright blue tie.

We are sitting in the family home on New Road in Belper, Derbyshire, which seems pretty much like any other family home. There's a crowded dresser, fireplace, piano, weary sofa, a couple of armchairs and a sprinkling of felt pens. Only two things strike me as unusual, there's no television, and on the table lie several plastic foetuses — an education kit from the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, normally available only in schools.

We'll come back to SPUC in a minute, but for now, here we all are: Ruth, Ruth's mother Mrs Davies, Ruth's older sister Katie and her son Isaac, Ruth's nephew. Intermittently we are noisily joined by Peter and Mary, Ruth's younger siblings, and Paul, Katie's first son (now five and the same age as Mary, his aunt) whom Katie had when she was 16 and who is still living at home. (She went back to start her A levels when he was 12 weeks old.)

There are three more sisters, Clare, Anna and Sarah, who have all left home, and another sister, Jane, died of brain damage when she was three. Dad, still at work, teaches maths and computing.

I have come because I am curious to know what it's like to discover a very clever child in the family. A child so clever that she was genuinely absorbed by books from the age of five months; a child so clever she attends special classes at Warwick University on Saturdays, and is taking an O level in psychology by correspondence.

The idea came from the Gifted Child Society who, understanding Ruth was frustrated at primary school, recommended Mrs Davies give the local college a ring and suggest her daughter take some extra-curricular courses. "The college said fine, then I told them she was 10 and they said 'No thank you'. They said adult students would resent a 10-year-old sitting next to them!"

"I wouldn't have minded," Ruth pipes up, "though I would like to spend all my time with adults, I like friends of my own age."

When did Mrs Davies realise Ruth was different from the rest of her brood?
"Sarah, my oldest daughter, did a dissertation on gifted children, and Ruth typed a lot of it up on the word-processor — because she's been very good on it since she was



Tidy mind, shame about the floor . . . Ruth Davies in reading mode. On the back cover of her first stint as an author, she wrote *Other Titles By This Author Include . . .* PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN ROBERTSON

two — and she recognised herself. I'd been ignoring it in a way, I thought it was simpler if they were all the same. Which reminds me I bought you a textbook today Ruth, on psychology."
"Oh great," says Ruth, returning from the kitchen with an apple crammed in her smile. Does she have a sense of being clever?
"I know I'm more intelligent than half the people in my class," "Gran-maa," shouts Paul bouncing in with Mary. "Gran-maa, can I have a sandwich?"

At the age of nine, Ruth insisted on learning algebra, but her teachers declined. The Derbyshire Education Authority does not allow pupils to be "accelerated" beyond their age-group.

After psychological tests showed she had the understanding of an adult, Ruth was finally accepted by the local Catholic comprehensive in September — the only school prepared to take her a year early.

"I don't like to criticise teachers," says Mrs Davies, "there are lots of them in our family — but at her last school, one said to me Ruth's working very hard and she's making us work very hard too! We don't have anything to offer her." Ruth stares out of the window. "She's cleverer than me!"
Her daughter remains silent. Indeed, for much of the time, she looks as if she's in her own world,

'Sarah did a thesis on gifted children, and Ruth typed it up on the word-processor — she's been very good on it since she was two'

surfacing only to answer questions politely. She's unprejudiced but confident enough to rebuff my attempts at encouraging smiles with the odd, suspicious stare. I later discover a local journalist once quoted her in an interview without even talking to her.

What else does she do when she's not studying? "I play the trumpet and piano," she says, clambering on to the piano stool, when I ask her to demonstrate. Mrs Davies suggests Peer Gynt. Katie prefers Dangerous Journey, which Ruth pulls off with a certain trundling style.

"I like the Warwick classes, because the teacher takes notice of what you say," she says abruptly. In the summer, the family camped in Yorkshire so Ruth could attend a summer school aimed at advanced children. "We did a lot of work," she grins, perking up as she talks about work.

"The tutors said they were doing a week and a half's work each day," interrupts Mrs Davies. "They told me Ruth is seriously underachieving because she's not regularly asked to do these kind of things. The guy who was running the course said she's quite eccentric."

"What does eccentric mean," asks Ruth.
"Nuts!" her mother giggles.
"What about her other hobbies?" "I write poetry. I'll go and see if I can find some," and she scram-

bles off her knees, returning almost immediately with a sheaf of papers.
"This is the first poem:
Behind a locked and heavy door, lies so much information, but I don't know where adults keep the key.

It seems they want to hold me back in my education, are they scared of what I just might see?
For ten long years I asked and I was always told to wait. You are too young, so just slow down they say.

I yearn to learn, please teach me now, and don't procrastinate. Unlock that door and help me on my way.
Does she feel different to other kids? "Well, how many other girls wear trousers and don't care what their hair looks like," Katie butts in from the sofa.

"Pandora wears trousers," counters Ruth crossly.
"Mum-my the bread's out," Mary shouts from the kitchen.
Does she get picked on as a swot? "Not really."
"I like the Warwick classes, because the teacher takes notice of what you say," her mother declares.

"Our Lady of Perpetual Suffering . . ." murmurs Ruth.
Mrs Davies: "When the Pope finally said girls could go on the altar, Ruth wrote a letter to the priest saying 'I want to be an altar girl' and she stood by the door waiting for him to pass and said 'Well . . .?' And the next week she

was an altar girl!" Ruth: "I'm a member of three bands, a Guide, a member of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and an aviation studies group which studies how aeroplanes fly. And I read, a lot, currently *Lord Of The Flies* . . ."

Mrs Davies: "She got told off for reading *Of Mice And Men*. They told her it was too old for her."
Ruth: "But I was really enjoying it. It was so full of emotion."
Mrs Davies: "They used to use her at school as another teacher, there was a queue at her desk of children. She'd be up at midnight saying 'What can I do?'"

Ruth: "I'm going to bin my apple."
Does she have a boyfriend?
"No."
Does she know yet what she'd like to do when she's older? "I want to study the psychology of the unborn child." Why? "Because I went to a SPUC conference on it. You know they've found out babies can hear tunes, they're going to see if they can distinguish different tunes."

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child features strongly in the Davies family. Katie made the local paper's front page when she was ejected forcibly from the teacher's fair at Derby University, after trying to set up a SPUC stand.
Confusingly, Katie's son Paul is now in the same class as his Aunt

Mary. Mrs Davies (excitedly): "Both of them were completely unplanned, but it worked out really well."
Katie: "We both got told off by doctors. I was too young, Mum was too old."
Mrs Davies: "They talk down to you."
Katie: "You get so patronised."
Mrs Davies (furious): "You go in and say you're pregnant and they offer you an abortion!"
Katie (splenetic): "They start getting the green forms out of the drawer."
Mrs Davies: "They tell you you'll be better soon, it's awful."
Katie: "Dreadful."
Mrs Davies (anger subsiding): "They're like, 'Did you plan this child? Not why have it then?'"

Katie: (sadly): "They always think you want an abortion."
From the dresser, Mrs Davies pulls out some old projects which Ruth has written about babies and then points to a series of 25 cards hung on a string above the fire. It's an advent calendar, made from last year's Christmas cards which Ruth has cut up and embellished with poems. Each night the family lights a candle and opens one of the cards to read the poem.

What about music, I ask finally, which bands does Ruth like? "The Cranberries." And what about a television, would she like one? "No. There's always lots of conversations here."

within the left, where everything that matters — and thus everything that is most questionable — is simply taken for granted.
And there is also the pleasure offered by a magazine such as the *Spectator* of a temporary absenteeism from the solemnities of the left. The right is less guilty about its frivolity than the left, for whom it is a distraction from the struggle. There is still something of the contrast between Roundheads and Cavaliers about the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator*. (The French critic Roland Barthes, taking issue with similar sentiments, said that anyone who thought that people on the left were incapable of enjoying the inconsequential obviously didn't know anything about French) and his cigars. To which you feel like responding: if that's the best counter-example he can come up with, a seasonal thought: good will to all men, even Republicans.
Jeremy Hardy is on holiday



Left is good but it's a lot more fun on the right

HAVE just returned from New York, where I was a guest at a Republican fund-raising dinner. It was \$500 a plate and most of the people there were congratulating themselves on their party's triumphs. Three men were singled out for special praise, described as "honorees" and given an award, to much applause.

To explain how I came to be at this bash is a story in itself, but let's just say I was there as a spectator rather than a celebrant. It seems that the Republicans are doing well in the State of New York, and (so they say) they are also doing well for New York State. Marginal tax rates are down and criminal conviction rates are up. If you listened uncritically to the speeches that night, you'd think that this is all that politics is about.

"Liberal" continues to be a term of abuse. As one supporter patiently explained to me, a liberal is simply a person who says "what's mine is mine and what's yours is

mine". Taxation is just a fraud. The government steals money from the thrifty and then gives it to the indigent, thereby demoralising them. Liberals are thus incompetent crooks; they first take our money and then they misspend it. They demotivate both the taxpayer and the ultimate recipient of the taxed money. If we can't keep the money we earn, why work? If we can get money without working, then again, why work?
And as, during the course of the evening, this argument is repeated (developed it isn't), the invisible connection between the crime rate and the tax rate becomes apparent. Tax rates are crime rates — records of thefts committed by the IRS against the vulnerably affluent. It's not that bringing the tax rate and the crime rate down are merely related activities; in some profound way, for these people, it's the same activity.
This was the doctrine being preached, intermittently and with-

out nuance, at the dinner. But if you believe, as I do, that taxation is a legitimate means of enlarging access to scarce resources (by funding hospitals, schools, public transport, etc) you will find nothing but a dimly impoverished self-interest in the Republican stance. Of course, it has its supporters over here too. What we might call the "delegitimising" of taxation as an instrument of social policy is one of the legacies of the Thatcher ministries. Indeed, it is a legacy that both the Major Government and the Blair Opposition have inherited.

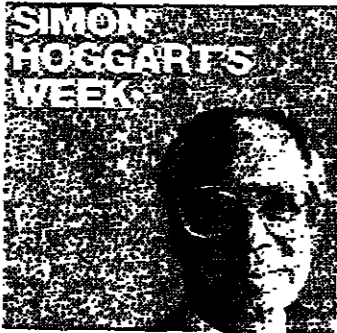
Am I alone in finding slightly depressing the enthusiasm with which the Labour Party has positively embraced this legacy? What has happened to the principle of the redistribution of wealth?
Still, listening to these alienating and unsympathetic dinner speeches made me ponder why one takes pleasure in, and can learn from, so much of the writing and teaching of those on the right.

It was a slightly guilty thought, and it was connected with my long held suspicion that, if confronted with the straight choice of a desert island subscription to either the

There is still something of the Roundheads versus Cavaliers about the New Statesman and the Spectator
Spectator or the *New Statesman*, I might be inclined to choose the former.
This isn't a criticism of the new editor of the *Statesman*; in the few weeks he's been running the magazine he has hugely improved it. The point is, rather, that however good the *Statesman* becomes, the

Spectator will continue to offer special, irreplaceable, pleasures. It was also prompted by reading on the plane over to New York, Eugene Genovese's book *The Southern Tradition*, which is a critical celebration of the conservatism of the American South.

Genovese, a native New Yorker writing out of the marxist left, believes that southern conservatives have much to teach the left, especially regarding "the irrationalities of its radical egalitarianism".
I think that the intellectual appeal of the right has to do with its challenge to the very premises of your own politics, and its many practical deficiencies. Confront writers who maintain, for example, that social justice is a mirage, or that taxation is state-sanctioned theft, and you take the measure of your own convictions.
They compel you not just to think, but to think against yourself. It's a bracing experience, and a welcome relief from debates



Great sentiments, shame about the song

THE DUKE of Edinburgh has long been our national Basil Fawlty, an unerring blend of the sinister and the comic...

unimaginable horror of knowing that their children spent their last few moments on earth in misery and terror...

"That producer ought to be shot" is a good way of damning a play without actually blaming your friend...

compassionate nature by telling people, in effect: "I know it's rough luck, but God says you can't..."

does recall reading a quote from Major in the course of his researches in which he clearly stated years ago that his nickname for Norma was "Grub"...

SMALLWEED could scarcely believe what he saw on his TV screen on Thursday night...

The long good buys

HEAD TO HEAD

It's time to polish off the Christmas shopping. Oh no! We're being turned into shopaholics, says Big Issue editor John Bird. But I adore it, replies Linda Grant, author of a novel on shopping and politics

Dear Linda,

I HATE shopping. Not shopping for essentials, those things that you need. But that other kind of shopping. That shopping as cultural activity...

ever onward to the detriment of their sense of well-being and to the detriment of their pocket. Personal inadequacies are overcome by the next purchase, not unlike a drug user...



ILLUSTRATION: STEVE CAPLIN

you get value for your money, you need to look at lots of things and spend your money wisely — hence more time mooching round the shops, not less...

Dear Linda,

MANY people buy crap because it is the very act of buying that is the important part of the transaction. They may even buy well-made things but buying is the high...

SWIFTCALL LOW COST INTERNATIONAL PHONE CALLS. A minimum pre payment of £25 entitles you to £25 of Swiftcall talktime, penny for penny that's over 4 hrs to the USA.

Dear John,

WELL, it's your own fault if you find yourself buying crap — obviously you can't spend enough of that all-important time wandering round the shops looking at what they've got and ensuring you don't make a wrong choice...

Dear John,

I expect you do not characterise shopping for books or records or indeed copies of the Big Issue as shopping at all. Men have defined shopping as the purchase of those goods that they themselves are not interested in...

Dear Linda,

BUT the crap is there to buy and people buy it. High Streets are full of crap shops. The fact that you don't buy it and I don't buy it is beside the point...

Doonesbury



BY GARRY TRUDEAU

SEEKING the Government wants to stop us calling Major's stance on Europe a "wait and see" policy and to call it instead "Negotiate and Then Decide"...

سنة من الاجل

Lovers in for the kill or the thrill?

Why do some women find convicted murderers adorable? Luke Harding and Stephen Bates report on romances like that of Lil Simon, who has travelled to America to marry killer Nick Campas

NEXT Thursday in small-town America a rather unusual wedding will take place between a middle-aged hairdresser from Bournemouth and a native American from the Yuki tribes of northern California. Watched by her four children, Lil Simon will go through a traditional Indian marriage ceremony. As guests sip punch and music plays softly, she will lie down on the floor with her groom, Nick Campas, aka Broken Arrow. They will be wrapped in a marriage blanket as a tribal chief chants and throws herbs at them. There will be brief congratulations and a few photos. But the conventional pleasures of a wedding night will have to be postponed — 10 years, to be precise. Wardens from Washington State Reformatory will march the groom away from the visiting room back to his cell, where he'll be hanged up. Broken Arrow is a convicted killer who stabbed his victim with a steak knife. Consequently, he and his bride have a long wait ahead of them: conjugal visits are forbidden by prison regulations and his earliest release date is May 3, 2006. This romance is one unlikely consequence of the dark events of May 15, 1988, when Nick Campas was invited back to the house of a 31-year-old single mother, Linda Thomas, for a drinking session. In the early hours of the morning he murdered her.

For Tacoma police department, in the far north-west of America, it was an unremarkable homicide. Detective John Pike, who investigated the murder eight years ago, struggles to recall even the barest details. "There are certain murders which stick out in your mind. This wasn't one of them," he confesses. On the night of the murder, Broken Arrow had met Linda Thomas in a downtown tavern, where they shot a few games of pool. Sitting in her lounge later, they drank several cans of beer and listened to CDs at full volume. At 8am he got up to leave. But then he took a steak knife from the kitchen and stabbed his victim repeatedly in the head and chest. Broken Arrow, aged 38, was arrested shortly afterwards in the dead woman's sports car, trying to sell her video recorder. During his trial he showed no remorse and was sentenced to 40 years, lowered on appeal. He is still likely to serve 16 years. But the killing was to have a curious epilogue. Last April, as he sat in his cell, he received a letter from Lil, whose first marriage lasted nine years and who claims to have had another nine-year relationship with a millionaire. She had answered a newspaper advertisement seeking pen-pals for prisoners in the UK and abroad. Almost instantly, they embarked on a giddy epistolary courtship, exchanging hundreds of passionate love notes and tapes, as well as photographs. "We just seemed to click and the more he wrote, the more intimate his letters became," Lil said. "We



The course of true love... engaged couple Nick Campas and Lil Simon, top; Marc Dutroux, object of much motherly affection, above; and happily-married Barry and Mary Rutter, left

were on the same wavelength and it wasn't long before I fell head over heels in love with him. "I wrote to him trying to explain my feelings and he wrote back saying 'If you're trying to tell me that you've fallen in love with me, all I can say is that I lost my heart to you weeks ago.'"

Lil flew to Seattle to get to know Broken Arrow better. On her third visit, he proposed. She accepted instantly, after spending just 83 hours in his company. "When he asked me to marry him I was thrilled — I've never felt this way about anyone before," she said.

Earlier this month Lil shut the front door of her Bournemouth semi for the last time. With her suitcases and children — Scott, aged 17, 15-year-old twins Vicky and Dee, and Guy, aged five, she set off to start a new life. Campas has signed his house in Tacoma over to Lil and his mother has given her her own engagement and wedding rings.

Were she an isolated example, Lil Simon could be dismissed as a naive, romantic fantasist deserving pity rather than scorn. But she

exemplifies an increasing phenomenon — women who fall in love with men who kill.

In Germany, Britain, the United States, Belgium — wherever there is a regulated penal system — women fall in love with dangerous, often crazy men, imprisoned for horrific crimes.

Most astonishing is the case of Marc Dutroux, the Belgian electrician currently under investigation for gruesome paedophile murders, who has acquired an unlikely fanclub of middle-aged women.

Each week, Dutroux gets dozens of largely friendly letters in the maximum security jail at Arlon, near the Luxembourg border. Admirers have sent him money to buy a television set and proposed marriage. They even sent him a teddy bear for his 40th birthday, which he celebrated recently.

What seems to motivate many of his female fans is not sexual desire, but maternal love. One, Anne, a mother with children, tried to send him some pyjamas after he complained he was cold at night. Last month, she gave an interview to a Belgian newspaper admitting she writes to Dutroux

several times a week. But why does she correspond with a man who allegedly allowed two eight-year-old girls, imprisoned in a makeshift dungeon in his home, to starve to death?

"Because I am human and he has got enough people disparaging him. He is not the first and he won't be the last paedophile."

Psychologists give several different explanations for this phenomenon, not all satisfactory. Undoubtedly, evil men have always had an appeal, a compelling fatal magnetism, for some women. In the case of Jan Felker, a Surrey banker whose husband was executed last month after serving 14 years on death row, long-term friendship turned into romance only after many years of correspondence.

Jan's relationship differed from others involving such inmates because there was compelling evidence to suggest her husband, Wayne, jailed for raping and killing a waitress in 1981, was innocent.

She started writing in November 1991, rising at 5am every day and replying to his "very humor-

ous" letters. Only with the execution of Briton Nick Ingram in April 1995, which brought home how close her correspondent was to death, did she become romantically involved. After one execution date had come and gone, the couple married secretly in prison in Georgia last May.

Since her husband's death, Jan has been answering letters of condolence at her home in Weybridge, many from other inmates on death row. How did her relationship with Wayne differ from her earlier failed marriage?

She responds with painful honesty. "He made me feel extremely special. He put me on a pedestal, he idolised me," she says. "It was hard not to feel special and I never had to fight for that position. He would have been a very hard act to follow. He was exceptional — humorous, witty and intelligent."

Most women who fall in love with convicted killers emphasise the individual reasons for their romances. They reject the tag of "murder groups". They are generally convinced of their partner's innocence or that he has changed and is no longer capable of murder.

Most have experienced disappointing relationships and are divorced or separated. They often suffer from low self-esteem. Cynics might point out that men in prison are less likely to run away than those on the outside, who have betrayed them in the past. When long-term prisoners are finally released, most of these relationships invariably fail.

Certainly, infamy has its own curious rewards. Peter Sutcliffe gets many marriage proposals, as does Jeremy Bamber, who was convicted of murdering five members of his family at an Essex farmhouse in 1985. Harry Roberts, jailed for life at the Old Bailey in 1966 for the murders of three unarmed policemen, also gets many letters from women explaining the erotic acrobatics they would like to perform for him.

In Germany, serial killer Thomas Holst was sprung from jail by his besotted Israeli psychotherapist Tamar Segal, who met him while he was in prison. Before they met and fell in love Segal, now in jail herself for aiding his escape, was a lesbian.

Dr Glenn Wilson, reader at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, points to the "hyper-masculinity" of convicted killers. His analysis is unashamedly Darwinian.

"Women see a man who is completely anti-social, living on the

fringes of society, who has a high dose of testosterone. He is the kind of male not to be trifled with. They see that as having survival value for their offspring."

Jan Arriens, secretary of Lifelines, which provides pen-friends for people on death row in the US, emphasises childhood and adolescence. "A lot of [these] women have generally suffered some kind of abuse in childhood and have learned to identify with abuse. There is a fatal attraction with people on death row for a certain kind of woman."

Arriens, who cautions women not to get romantically involved with prisoners they write to (some 2,000 women in the UK write), refers to the "candle-lit dinners on paper" which drive many of these relationships very hard and be romantic on paper and forget all the day-to-day difficulties you get in real life."

MOST marriages do not last. There are the indignities of visiting — crowded rooms, vigilant wardens and the low-slung tables — which make any kind of physical intimacy impossible. Couples operate under conditions of great strain. Some, however, do succeed.

Mary Rutter met her husband Barry while he was working at a bird sanctuary in Bognor Regis while on day-release from Ford Open Prison. Barry strangled his aunt as a young man in his twenties and served 14 years before being released.

He is now back inside. His parole licence was revoked earlier this year after he was caught drink-driving, a sad parody of his chronic alcoholism which, Mary believes, could have been avoided by counselling.

She stresses that she knew nothing about Barry's background when they first met. She also believes her husband should have been convicted of manslaughter, not murder.

"I did fancy him the first time I saw him. But I put it to the back of my mind. I thought I have got two kids. What guy is going to want to be involved with me?"

Meanwhile, in Washington State Reformatory, Broken Arrow gets ready for his nuptials. He is marrying in haste next Thursday. But he can allow himself a wry smile at the expense of his critics. After all, he has plenty of leisure in which to repent.

Fidel Castro cancelled Christmas, but, says Stephen Smith, Cubans queue for Midnight Mass

Dreaming of a red Christmas



Welcome to Cuba... its churches are crowded after years of official disapproval of religion. PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN REARDON

IT WAS Christmas Eve in Havana and the fatted pig across the street was getting his. A black man who looked like he had once boxed kept the pig on the roof behind the Cabaret Las Vegas, a nightspot where the girls danced to salsa till dawn.

Early on the morning of the 24th, there was a good deal of squealing coming from the roof. After several long minutes, it ceased; in the late afternoon, the man could be seen out on the roof again, gnawing a bone.

It was the coldest I had known Cuba. The temperature never fell below the middling teens centigrade during the day, but there was *mucho aire*, as the Cubans said, a lot of air. In the evenings Hilda, the woman I was renting an apartment from in old, dilapidated central Havana, would put a pan of water on for my bucket bath (except on the days when there was no gas, shortages of this fuel compounding problems of electricity cuts and restricted water supply).

I wanted to be in Cuba at Christmas last year because I was intrigued by travel agents' reports that December and January were the most popular months for the island, despite or perhaps because of the fact that the closest visitors would get to a white Christmas would be a slushy *daiquiri*.

Tourists who spent Yuletide in the Caribbean presumably fancied the idea of getting away from European winter. And it was reasonable to assume that some of them were hard-core Christmas-haters; or at the very least, that they were ill-disposed to the tinsel trappings of the holidays

back home. If so, then Cuba was perfect for them. In what was almost literally a pantomime of hard-heartedness, Fidel Castro had cancelled Christmas. I could never understand why Castro's critics in Washington and Miami hadn't made more of this. There was good knocking copy in the irony that the man whose beard was almost as well-known as St Nick's was the Scrooge of the Caribbean.

Perhaps he was aware of this danger. In an interview in 1985, he fondly recalled his childhood Christmases. "Christmas Eve was a wonderful thing, because it meant 15 days of vacation — and not just 15 days of vacation, but 15 days of festive atmosphere and treats: cookies, candies and nougat."

Cuban children wrote their begging letters not to Santa Claus but the Three Wise Men. The future guerrilla and revolutionary asked them for cars, trains and movie cameras, but received toy trumpets on three consecutive Noëls. "I should have become a musician," he joked.

It all begged the question of why he had vetoed Christmas, the negligence of the Magi notwithstanding.

In one sense, the most obvious impact of Fidel's decision to scrap Christmas was that December 25 was not a public holiday for Cubans. It was true that at one or two of the barren official *dinners*, assistants sat unconsidered at their counters like Bob Cratchit. But on Christmas morning, a truck laden with boxes of food pulled up outside Hilda's and began unloading at the *bodega*,

the ration shop, where they had decorated a small, false fir. These *bodegas* are used to offset hardship in the country's current sorry state. The regime calls it the "special period in time of peace" — the phrase of rationing and swingeing cutbacks, apparently without end, which has accompanied the drying-up of aid from the former Soviet bloc and the tightening of a United States embargo.

The *bodega* outside Hilda's place always seemed to have a queue, mainly of elderly people, waiting for it to open. Cubans were entitled to a daily bun. There were also four pounds of rice a month on the ration, and 10 ounces of red, green and black beans. "Sometimes there are months when you don't see soap," said Hilda wistfully. From time to time, there were savoury biscuits and sweets for the children. There was cooking oil "when it comes".

THERE was one bottle of rum per household per month, for 20 pesos. The state bestowed its secular blessing on marriage by giving newlyweds a cake, three boxes of beer, and a ration for clothes and shoes. When Hilda's sister got married, the Revolution gave towels.

One reason I'd wanted to spend Christmas in Havana was mass on Christmas Eve. Walking at night to the Carmen, the nearest church to my apartment and the one Hilda attended, and seeing the Carmen statue lit up; Hilda telling me that this lit up; Hilda telling me that this lit up; birds — or were they bats? — skittering around inside the cupola of the

church: this was the Cock Mass. The title suggested a dawning, a renewal, but also spoke of the country's mingled African and Spanish past.

We arrived at the church early, by 11pm, and it was soon clear why it was packed. There were smartly turned out ladies of a certain age, courting couples, men in their best suits. A black man of about 45 was asleep at the end of our pew. In front of the monstrous sideboard of an altar was a Christmas tree — it wasn't real, but it was decked out with all the trimmings, including flashing lights.

Homemade wreaths decorated the columns. People took a turn around the mezzanine of the Franciscan seminary next door, apparently in the forlorn hope of a becoming free by the time they returned to the church. The Cubans were *queuing* for Mass. For people so accustomed to standing in line, an hour's wait for God was not out of the way.

Why were all these people here, I wondered. Did they all believe? Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve always draws a crowd, even in Britain. It remained a free, or more or less free show, in a country of poverty.

But a Hollywood blockbuster was screening on Cuban television, an entirely cost-free alternative attraction. Hilda, her son Nico, and I had left it in the first reel, having sat through a Brazilian soap opera, our makeshift Cuban family gathered in front of the television set on Christmas Eve.

A sensitive issue about the de-recognition of Christmas in Cuba was what it meant for Christians, and, in a less immediate way, all

their fellow Cubans. Going to church had never been illegal in revolutionary Cuba, but for a time it had been very difficult.

The closing of churches marked the nadir in Castro's relations with Christians. In his most forceful statement, broken Arrow *Comandante* explicitly denied that a single church door had been shut. But senior figures in the Catholic church told me that this was an untruth. Castro said that Catholicism was the reign of Cuba's old, Spanish, slave-owning elite; perhaps this helps explain why Christmas was removed from the Cuban calendar: it wasn't regarded as a festival of the people.

In the Carmen, the choir entered singing a carol. The priest brought up the rear, with a doll of Jesus. There was the campbhor smell of the censor. The priest, standing at the altar, was momentarily blinded by a cloud of incense.

I talked to Hilda about going to church. Yes, she had always gone, she said.

"Antes? Before?"

"You weren't supposed to, you were afraid, and you thought that you were being watched, but you came," said Hilda.

Stephen Smith is a reporter with Channel 4 News. This is an extract of *The Land of the Miracles*, published by Little, Brown on January 2. To order a copy for the special price of £16.99 (inc p&p) (rrp £17.99) call Guardian Interactive on 0500 600102 or send a cheque payable to Guardian Interactive to 250 Western Avenue, London W8 6EZ.

arts



The Lumière brothers' train thrilled audiences with a new technology that has become the vehicle of its own destruction. Later cinema-goers demanded more (King Kong) and more (Terminator 2). But at what price to the soul of the artform?

SHOOTING STARS

Rising: Natascha McElhone

... The young McElhone leaves LAMDA and makes for Regents Park. Not for a celebratory picnic, but for humble roles in the Open Air Theatre.

... But Lady Luck smiles on tall, blonde Natascha. Merchant-Ivory swoop for her, to play long-suffering Francoise Gilot in their Picasso biopic.

and away ... Her performance as lover to the cavalier Cubist wins great acclaim, and job offers duly follow.

Falling: Sylvester Stallone

going ... The big-shot behind Rocky and Rambo can do no wrong. Except try his hand at comedy. Sleep Or My Mom Will Shoot, anyone?

going ... Sly announces that his films are 'stupid'. The 50-year-old bruiser now wants the Al Pacino roles.

going: Daylight, released this week, sees Sly in action mode yet again just as he announces this that he's moving to London—Florida is too dangerous.

Art forms of the century

At the close of its 100th year, cinema is haunted by a terror of its own demise. Jonathan Romney on how the movies became a monster

Terminated?

LAST year, 40 leading film-makers from around the world contributed to a portmanteau film called Lumière Et Compagnie. In celebration of cinema's centenary, each was commissioned to make a film using a reconstruction of the Lumière brothers' prototype movie camera, the Cinématographe. Each film had to be shot in a single take lasting roughly 50 seconds, the time it took to hand-crank the Lumière's original film strips, also recreated for the purpose. The film-makers — including David Lynch, James Ivory, Zhang Yimou and Spike Lee — rose to the challenge in different ways, several produc-

ing pedestrian notions, but a few finding ingenious ways to celebrate the simplicity and silence that, 100 years after its conception, cinema has largely repressed. It's understandable that at the end of cinema's first century, film-makers should be tempted to return to its source and try to fathom, in retrospect, what cinema could possibly have meant when it was untrammelled by a century of social, commercial and theoretical impositions. There's a powerful anxiety behind this quest: on the cusp of the millennium, cinema is haunted by a terror of its own impending death by returning to the scene of its birth.

This obsession with fragments of history seems to be peculiarly European, while the American film imagination largely seems intent on representing the past altogether. We tend to think of Hollywood as being fixated on the past, in its tendency to thrive on sequels and remakes. But Hollywood in the late 1990s is addicted to the future, to technologies of novelty. The development of digital effects — the art of the impossible, immaterial images — has fuelled the return to prominence of science fiction: of previously unrealisable films such as Independence Day or the latest in the Star Wars series. Many of the new digital

epics, however, are not just about the future, but about the end of something: apocalypse in its various guises. In Independence Day, the Earth is ravaged by alien, then reprieved to flourish again, doomsday is eclipsed by a rebirth for the next millennium. In the current wave of disaster-related films — Jurassic Park, Waterworld, Twister, two forthcoming volcano films — apocalypse is inflicted by a New Age subset of natural renewal and cosmic life cycles. These films enact the fantasy of conjuring up doomsday yet controlling it (the whirlwind in Twister is the ultimate controllable force: a hurricane that is entirely pixel-generated). In these fantasies of a millennial tabula rasa, Hollywood is invoking the end of its 20th century and trying to take symbolic control of its century to come.

Yet, in presenting these spectacular futures, cinema is very much in thrall to a nostalgia that has afflicted it from its very start. The medium constantly strives to recapture the shock of the real, that primal moment enshrined in myth, when the Lumière first terrified and delighted roomfuls of unwary viewers with the hair-raising vision of the train arriving at La Ciotat station.

A century on, film-makers are obliged to find ever more elaborate ways to bolster the effect of reality. The need to make images increasingly vivid and extraordinary has led to a process of constant inflation in the technology of wonder. Digital; the IMAX format, 10 times the size of the standard 35mm frame; Showscan projection at 60 frames per second, bypassing the eye's ability to discern projected frames from reality — all these are moving us towards a cinema of total immersion. The result may not be what we traditionally think of as cinema at all. It's always been a central part of the cinematic process that the viewer is not simply fooled or overcome, but persuaded — that we contribute to the creation of the mirage by maintaining some critical distance towards what we see. But the new technology aspires to bypass the critical faculty entirely to create a seamless image that can't be unpeeled or analysed. Critical orthodoxy regards movies as Hollywood cinema as a smart, ironic interweaving of codes that appeal to the culturally hyper-conscious viewer; and yet on the level of visual perception we're in danger of becoming the most passive audiences yet.

It's hard to do anything but marvel passively at the alphas and wonders emerging from the digital utopia. Since the radical innovations of Terminator 2 (1991) and Jurassic Park (1993), Hollywood has been driven by a Promethean drive to create its own life forms, to challenge the old natural bounds of possibility. The old Hollywood caveat "it can't be done" need never apply again. Digital can melt and mobilise the human form (Terminator 2), or mutilate it (Death Becomes Her, Tim Burton's forthcoming Mars Attacks!); it can create monsters (Jurassic Park, The Abyss) or even, we're promised, human life. James Cameron's Avatar aspires to be the first film with a cast of entirely digitally-generated stars.

Soon, digital may raise the dead: the long-promised screen resurrection of Marilyn Monroe and Humphrey Bogart is said to be closer than expected. In the meantime, rather more abstractly, the film Dragonheart has caught the "essence" of Sean Connery using motion capture techniques to record his facial expressions and programme them into the features of a digital dragon. It's the first

instance of an electronic attempt to quantify an actor's "soul", which suddenly looks less ineffable than we once thought. The meteoric rise of the new digital artillery — which even five years ago, Hollywood regarded as marginal — is radically changing the face of mainstream cinema. With the number of specialist personnel and amount of equipment required to make an effects movie, the director is no longer the all-powerful dictator-visionary who once flourished under the auteur model of film-making, but something like a glorified project manager coordinating a huge corporate research initiative. And, as the film industry pumps more resources into training digital specialists, the openings for non-effects-led cinema may by necessity become limited.

If independent low-budget American film-making is so energetic, that's partly because it recognises itself as an endangered species. Large-scale film-making is likely to be an increasingly exclusive field, as much ruled by technological control as it was in the heyday of the Hollywood studio system. National cinemas are certain to lose out in the struggle, if they do not have the resources necessary to make a film meet the international visual standards that digital technology imposes.

But digital also entails thornier questions of the way cinema shows us the world, or conjures up a simulacrum of it. It has always been perilously naive to look to film for a faithful record of the world, but the old arguments about reality and deception have taken a complex new turn as the very material of the screen image has changed. Digital makes the image simply a plastic mass of manipulable pixels. The more spectacular digital images are transparently hallucinations, but more problematic is the discreet doctoring of reality in a film such as Forrest Gump, in which Gary Sinise's legs are digitally amputated in surreptitious hyper-real fashion. Realist Hollywood cinema now routinely has recourse to invisible erasing of unwelcome elements — safety wires, TV aerials in costume dramas, the wrong face in a crowd.

But beyond making realism suspect, there's a more intangible form of reality loss: the loss of that indefinable mystery of things that you could best call "presence" or "aura". Digitally created objects can look perfectly real (indeed, excessively so). They are hyper-literal because every aspect of their appearance — their weight, their texture, the way they reflect light — is programmed, predetermined, leaving nothing to chance. They lack that element of accident, of peculiarity, that has always given

make a comeback). We can expect a demand for low-budget vérité drama set in real places, and perhaps a major documentary boom. There may be a fetishistic demand for the more extreme sorts of vérité spectacle — real sex, real death — and films will be prefaced by the guarantee that no fakery took place, just as rock stars used to bear the Lumière assurance "No synthésiers used". But perhaps the desire for reality will result in the emergence of a different, subtler sort of reality — the sort of intangible reality of people, places, objects that we associate with the humanist cinema tradition. The Cannes triumph of Secrets And Lies this year suggests a vote for the reality that attaches to people's faces, actions, environments in a film — for the sort of intensely crafted, intensely lived experience that demands the viewer's emotional and imaginative participation, and that Hollywood has lately sidelined.

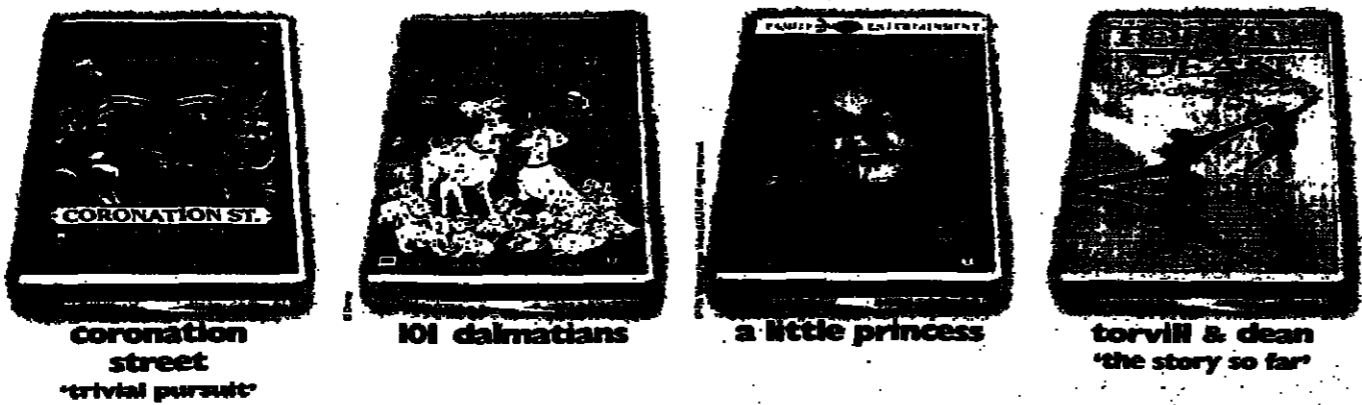
But, taking things further, we can imagine films that explore a different realism, that use an effect of heightened everydayness and even banality to hint at something else. Paul Schrader once identified the visually austere films of Robert Bresson, Carl Theodor Dreyer and Yasujiro Ozu as exemplars of "transcendental style".

If there's a transcendental stylist at work today it's Denmark's Lars Von Trier, whose Breaking The Waves shows us little that's visually spectacular, but who uses a particular sort of energy in his camerawork, and an unusual depth of intimacy in acting style to produce something that's emotionally involving, hard to quantify, morally unsettling, and that hints at a religious dimension, if you care to respond to it. You could call it spiritual realism.

VON TRIER'S is just one possible approach to a crisis of the cinema image. Most contemporary film-making regards the picture on screen as a purely instrumental mechanism for dispensing pleasurable stimuli. Somehow the image's texture and weight have been impoverished, it's as if the image itself, with all its potential richness, were a messy, embarrassing surplus to be discarded as soon as possible. Mystically suspect though Von Trier's cinema may be, it subscribes to the attitude that cinema is "an art unlike any other; quintessentially modern; distinctively accessible; poetic and mysterious and erotic and moral — all at the same time." The words are Susan Sonntag's in The Guardian earlier this year, lamenting not only what she saw as the "ignominious, irreversible decline" of cinema, but also the end of cinephilia, a particular regard for film as something that's as big as life.

If we want cinema to maintain that big-as-life quality, we have to hope that independent film-making survives — independent in the sense of out there, disident, argumentative. We have to place faith in auteurs, in film-makers with a passion not only for subjects but also for the textures and rhythms of the image, and above all with a desire to transform them, violently if necessary. We should be looking to people like (to name a few) Atom Egoyan, Julio Medem, Wong Kar-wai, Jane Campion, Todd Haynes, the Quayes, Moufida Tlatli, Rose Troche. But the future shouldn't entail a simplistic art-house/Hollywood divide — we should be getting equally excited about developments yet to come from corporate names: Industrial Light and Magic, Pixar, Digital Domain, the IMAX Systems Corporation, Dreamworks.

The cinephilia of the future may not be the one we know — it may be home-centred and electronic. We may be seeing the last of the old "church" model — a congregation sitting in the dark watching the reflection of light through celluloid. Cinema's survival at the end of the millennium is a hot topic of debate because it's twice as exciting to be able to lament and debate in the same breath. The important thing is not to be falsely ingenuous. It's not a question of filming with innocent eyes, as Wim Wenders proposes — right now, film-makers need eyes that are sceptical, or angry, or mischievous, or mendacious, or sentimental, but steely above all, and focused on the courage to invent.



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MEGASTORES

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Life and Soul

Starky And Hutch (Bravo) Our boys went undercover as hotel hairdressers...

What would happen if Doctor Finlay and Doctor Cameron swapped jobs with Starky and Hutch? Both, after all, are stock double-acts with all the mutual fondness and occasional irrationality that implies.

What would happen if Dr Cameron and Dr Finlay swapped jobs with Starky and Hutch?

fires and flickering desire to keep them from madness and board games: the same conceit that some TV programmes somewhere plays reassuringly each year.

Marry, be damned

What have The Merry Wives Of Windsor and Ibsen's Little Eyolf got in common? Not a lot, thought Michael Billington, until he saw the RSC's two latest productions

The revelation

As in Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf, a child - in this case indisputably real - is the means of exposing marital guilt. The important idealist, Alfred Almers, and the fiercely sensual Rita have never recovered from the fact that their son was crippled through their own negligence.

Noble, whose earlier productions of A Doll's House and The Master Builder revealed an extraordinary understanding of Ibsen, also gets the point here: that the play is dominated by what Ibsen calls "the law of change".

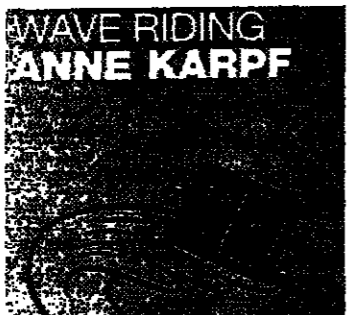


Guilt edged... Joanne Pearce and Robert Glenister in Little Eyolf

Indeed, he even gives an Ibsenite twist to the climax of the scene where the maniacally jealous Ford ransacks his house in search of his wife's assumed lover.

European, funny-foreigner joke to present us with a man of insatiable curiosity about the language that he so constantly mishears.

Windsor marriages but that lacks a Falstaff of the right spiritual, as well as physical, fatness: after Little Eyolf, one craves a Big Jack.



Dame Edna, RIP

A FUNERAL took place on Radio 2 last week: the last vestiges of Dame Edna Everage's wit were laid to rest. The corpse was a skeletal thing - s/he'd no wit left to speak for a long time now.

abused in the name of comedy, but this was lazy, barb-free, feelgood humour which the guests could comfortably play along with since it sanctioned more or less the same quantities of onerous prattle as any traditional chat-show.



Bruce Sansom and Miyako Yoshida as the Prince and Cinderella

Fairy entertaining

Judith Mackrell has a ball at the Royal Ballet's production of Cinderella

The treat

THE really charming thing about Frederick Ashton's Cinderella is that everyone gets to the ball - the Fairy Godmother and her attendants, the jester, the hairdresser, the Prince's friends and even the Ugly Sisters.

Provocations

NICE little cameo, the part of Ruthven the Highland Vampire, in a late Georgian melodrama shown in Christopher Freyling's biting history of Count Dracula on BBC1 this week.

The powers that be are no longer content with power alone, says Vera Rule

Vanity, vanity, all is vanity

the audience had to listen to all these words spoken by nobodies - professional actors who got to love, die and be admired for four hours. The maximum visibility the audience could achieve, by contrast, was to sit by the stage, flaunting their clothes and persons.

Garth Cartwright on 'the world's second best band', No Way Sis

Zombie karaoke

The clones

THE Oasis phenomenon keeps rolling: on Thursday you could hear Underworld playing Oasis songs live in Greater London. Radio's morning session then head to the Empire in the evening to see No Way Sis do their take on the Manchester superstars.

John Birt is making a rare on-screen appearance

John Birt is making a rare on-screen appearance. Bowle at 50 special. Both you and TV - have moved on since you last did it 25 years ago, Mr Yentob. Then there's Michael Wearling, head of BBC drama series (Boys From The Blackstuff to Pride And Prejudice).

Rugby Union

Ian Malin on the Irish outsiders hoping to clean up in the fifth round's only all-first division clash in the Pilkington Cup today

Bath time for Anderson's Exiles

WILLIE Anderson took his London Irish side to Bath yesterday afternoon, a trip that looked as futile as going Christmas shopping with an expired Barclays card...

No disrespect to the Exiles, and the Recreation Ground is not quite the citadel it was, but Bath have not been beaten in the Pilkington Cup there for six years...

Something of a character in his playing days, Anderson once gained notoriety when he marched his Ireland side up to the noses of Wayne Sheffield's All Blacks...

Yes, of course it'll be difficult. Bath have excellent players in every position, the game's on their own ground and there'll be 10,000 screaming people there...



In the hot seat... Willie Anderson sets out for Bath yesterday for his first Pilkington Cup match as director of rugby at London Irish. ANDY BLACKMORE

bury. But they have lost their other eight league games and are anchored alongside Orrell and West Hartlepool at the foot of a division from which three clubs at least will be relegated next spring...

reason why we can't get into a winning sequence. I'm spending 100 per cent of my time coaching at the moment but I want to get the development of players right...

which Ireland lost 23-6, the captain gave an after-dinner speech in which he said rugby union should be put in perspective...

Fulcher will be missing from the second row today after injuring his wrist in Ireland's defeat by Australia last month. It is a body-blow for the Irish but there is a ray of hope...

helped with the coaching duties this week in Ashton's absence, shrugs off their troubles. "We've always had internal arguments down here, especially when Jack Rowell was coach...

Twickenham digs deep to give clubs a £40,000 Christmas bonus

TWICKENHAM is playing Santa Claus by giving all 24 First and Second Division clubs a £40,000 Christmas bonus to help the poorer teams settle their wage bills...

English Professional Rugby Union Clubs, which represents the 24, signing an agreement with the RFU that was negotiated on December 5...

Clubs now owned by multi-millionaires such as Newcastle and Richmond have been able to pay some huge salaries for their players...

Members at Coventry have rejected a takeover bid from the city's soccer club. They voted instead, by a large majority, to explore the best possible deal with the property group Leander...

Weekend fixtures

Table listing weekend fixtures for various leagues including National League, Bell's Scottish League, and others. Includes match times and venues.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Table listing National League fixtures for Saturday and Sunday, including teams like Charlton, Grimsby, and Reading.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Table listing Bell's Scottish League fixtures for Saturday and Sunday, including teams like Dundee, Celtic, and Aberdeen.

Rugby Union

Table listing Rugby Union fixtures for Saturday and Sunday, including matches like London Irish vs Bath and others.

Lingfield

Table listing Lingfield fixtures for Saturday and Sunday, including matches like Havant & Waterlooville vs Havant.

Uttoxeter

Table listing Uttoxeter fixtures for Saturday and Sunday, including matches like Uttoxeter vs Burton Albion.

Whistle-stop action wipes out big games

David Plummer on the strike by referees which has left little to watch in Wales

IT IS normally the weather that brings the game in Wales to a halt in December but not one match will be played in the top five divisions today because the Welsh Society of Rugby Referees has gone on strike...

There are three central points of contention: the referees want to be paid on a sliding scale for taking charge of matches in the top division; they want the deal backdated to the start of the season...

The Bridgend chairman Derrick King sympathised. "If it were not such an important fixture with a bearing on the top four of the First Division and a place in the European Cup next season, we would have obliged because we know Llanelli's financial position is not healthy..."

The top match of the day was to be the visit of the First Division leaders Swansea to Cardiff but pride of place now goes to the all-Second Division cup tie between Cardiff Institute and Aberdareilly...

Quite why they offered such stiff resistance I cannot understand, because our package is only costing them £50,000. I do not know if they thought we would not carry out our threat or that we were not united in our stand but they have learned a hard lesson...

It is the clubs in Wales which are counting the cost rather than the WRU. "This strike is a disaster," said the Llanelli chairman Stuart Gallacher, who made desperate attempts to fulfil his club's home fixture against Bridgend...

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Majo

A vertical advertisement on the right side of the page, featuring the name 'Majo' and some illegible text and graphics.

Racing

Ron Cox predicts victory for Borders raider in the Betterware Cup Handicap Chase at Ascot

Major looks all set to ring the bell

MORE than a few years have passed since Ken Oliver, the veteran Hawick trainer, plundered a whole string of jump racing's big prizes with classy chasers like Fighting Fit.

But there is a revival in the Borders area and at the forefront is Major Bell, who travels south to Ascot to take a leading chance in the Betterware Cup Handicap Chase.

Trained by Alistair Williams near Hawick, Major Bell lost his unbeaten record over fences when he journeyed to Ascot last month. But it required the considerable talents of the well-handicapped Strong Promise to deny the Scottish raider, who maintained his improved form with a battling four lengths second.

That race, the First National Bank Gold Cup, was over two miles and three furlongs and Major Bell will appreciate the step up to three miles today. His showed useful form over hurdles at the longer trip, notably when running What A Question to a length at Aintree last year.

Major Bell reeled off five wins over fences — albeit including a lucky success at Chepstow — and would have been a five lengths winner here last time with Strong Promise out of the way.

Brian Harding, his regular jockey, is injured but Major Bell will get every assistance from the saddle with Norman Williamson deputising, and if the ground remains on the fast side that will be no problem.

Under a vintage ride from Richard Dunwoody in this race last year, Unguided Missile raced to do so again, but it was a handicap which would be getting 16lb from Pleasure Shared.

A 7lb penalty may not be enough to anchor Make A Stand (1.10) in the Mitie Group Kennel Gate Novice Hurdle, although there are one or two "dark horses" here who could test Martin Pipe's front-runner, Perfect Pal, in particular, is one to note.

It will be interesting to see how one-time top class hurdler Oh So Risky fares against stronger opposition on his second start over fences in the Book of Music Novice Chase.

Or Royal, Martin Pipe's expensive French purchase, could be top class but might need soft ground and it can pay to stick with Simply Dashing (2.35), who is the lucky not to be unseated this season.



Cup target... Unguided Missile (left), winning at Haydock last month, bids to follow up at Ascot today

Moorcroft Boy heads Welsh National weights

Ken Oliver yesterday's declaration of his five top weights defecting, leaving Moorcroft Boy, last season's Scottish National winner, heading the list with 11st 7lb.

The Tote make Kim Bailey's Fellow Countryman their market leader at 9-2, while Ladbrokes have Belmont King and Fellow Countryman joint favourites at 4-1.

Agistment, whose only feat in his career was when sixth in the Cheltenham Festival Bumper last

March, was given a fine ride by Richard Dunwoody in the BEF Novice Hurdle at Uttoxeter yesterday.

Despite his impressive credentials, the five-year-old was sent off 5-2 second favourite with David Nicholson's Mighty Moss heading the market at 6-4 on.

Having been sent to the front by Dunwoody approaching the fourth from home, Agistment looked all set for a spot when he was headed by Mighty Moss at the penultimate furlong.

However, Dunwoody urged his mount for another effort and he gained the upper hand close home to score by half a length.

Jimmy Fitzgerald, the gelding's trainer, explained that Agistment gives few clues as to his abilities on the home gallops.

"He's the worst horse I have got at home and the best horse I have on the racecourse," said Fitzgerald. "If you want to sell something, you can work it with him, he's such a laxy horse — he's blowing his head off now."

"He threw a splint before the Cheltenham Bumper and Richard said he blew up where the second last hurdle would be. But he's a fine, big horse, and today's runner-up is a very good horse."

Agistment's next run may be the Challow Hurdle at Newbury next Saturday.

Dunwoody had earlier been successful aboard Tjano Gold, who defeated Master Tribute by five lengths in the Strohbe Bolders & Radiators Handicap Hurdle.

In view of the uncertain long-term weather forecast for next week, with widespread frost a possibility, Lingfield will stage an all-weather Flat meeting on Boxing Day.

Bobby first win for Grant

CHRIS GRANT, former top northern jockey, saddled his first winner as a trainer when Bobby Grant landed the Levy Board Intermediate Flat Race at Hexham yesterday.

The Northumberland track was also the venue where Grant rode his first winner back in 1977.

Bobby Grant, named by owner John Thompson after his trainer, was sent off at 9-1 and beat Maggie Melody by two and a half lengths under Peter Niven.

Grant, who partnered 788 winners during his career in the saddle, said: "I always enjoyed riding round here but this has given me a good feeling as well."

"With a name like that I told Mr Thompson that the horse was handicapped before he started racing."

The 40-year-old, who took over his Hexham stable in 1990, has 10 horses in training at his establishment at Wolveston in Teesdale.

Before training on his own account he assisted wife Sue at her point-to-point yard where he gave up riding two and a half years ago.

It was not such a happy day for trainer John White who was fined £1,000 by the Jockey Club disciplinary committee for "failing to exercise reasonable care" with one of his horses.

White was penalised following a lengthy inquiry into his handling of the six-year-old Flying Eagle.

He had been called to answer charges concerning the gelding's condition after leaving his yard last April and his alleged failure to inform the owner of a tendon injury the gelding suffered during a race at Kempton in October last year.

After considering statements from White who was legally represented, along with his vet, the Jockey Club committee found him to be in breach of rule 51.

White was judged not to have exercised reasonable care with regard to Flying Eagle which was found to be acted in the owner's interests by neglecting to inform him of the reason for resting the horse.

Ascot card with guide to the form

Table of race results for Ascot, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Table of race results for Ascot, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Table of race results for Ascot, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Table of race results for Ascot, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Haydock runners and riders

Table of race results for Haydock, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Table of race results for Haydock, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Table of race results for Haydock, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Table of race results for Haydock, including race numbers, names, and winners.

Results

Table of race results for various tracks, including race numbers, names, and winners.

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RACELINE logo and contact information for Ascot, Haydock, Uttoxeter, and Lingfield.

Stile-stop on wipes big game

STW

Soccer

Pearce takes charge as door opens for new Forest regime

STUART PEARCE began the transformation from player to manager yesterday when a day after Nottingham Forest had accepted the resignation of Frank Clark...

Pearce said he intends to review his position in mid-January, by which time Forest's protracted takeover battle will have been resolved...

Forest favourite, return to the City Ground from Manchester City on a month's loan. Pearce has made no secret of wanting to move into management...

have preferred to take over a team at the top of the League with no problems on the pitch, but that is not the case. The chairman (Irving Korn) rang me and asked if I would be prepared to take on the challenge...

Korn revealed that Clark's final act as Forest's manager was typically generous - he recommended that Pearce should replace him...



Taking it on the chin... Pearce in Forest's hot seat

Beechy ahead of the game

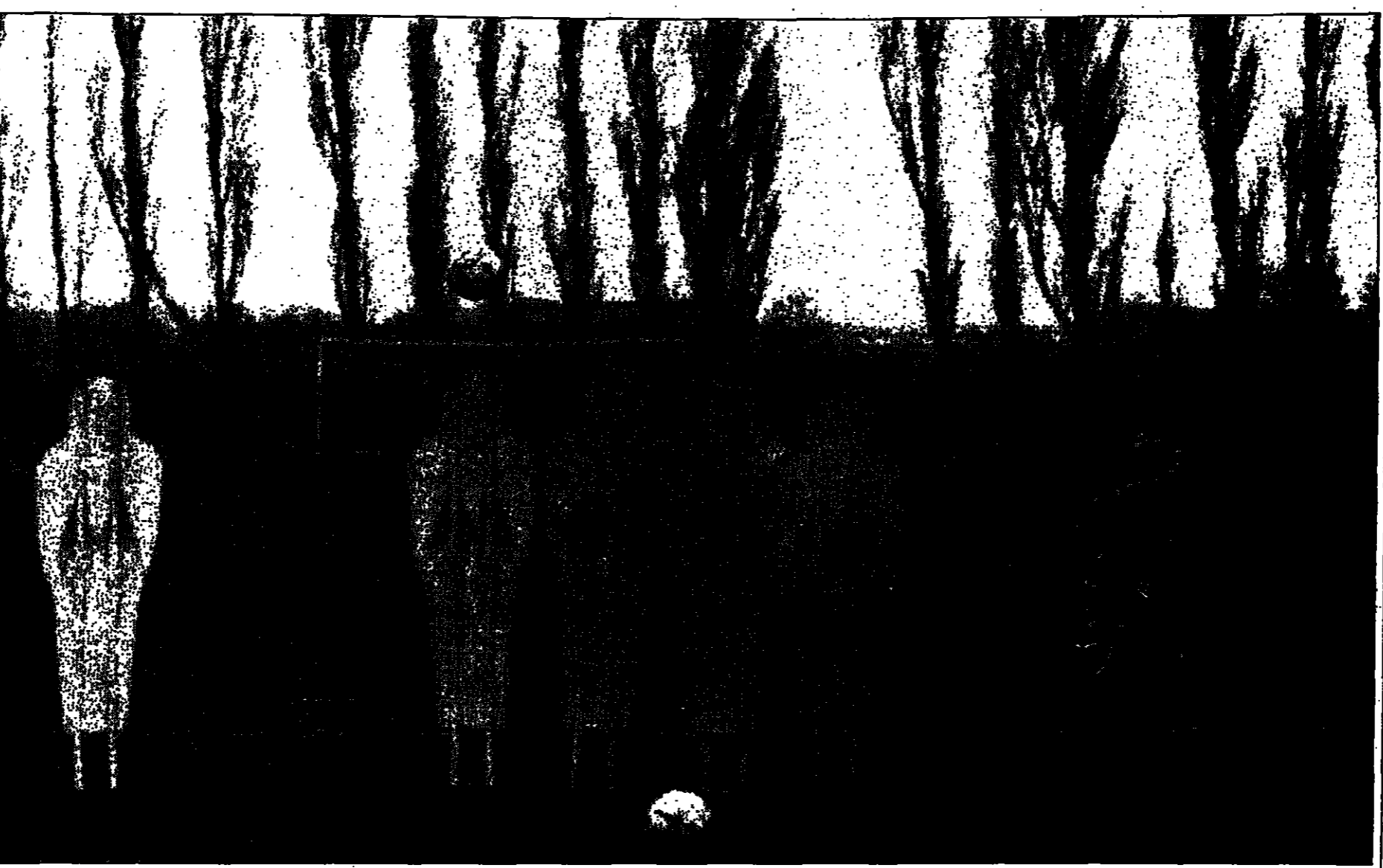
Soccer Diary Neil Robinson

WHAT a result! Paul Gascoigne threw himself at the mercy of Beechy Colclough and now, eight weeks later, we have firm evidence that the shrink-wrapping has worked...

David Lacey examines the Premiership's four-match holiday programme which could sort out the probables from the possibles among the title pretenders

The thrill of the race starts here

THERE is every prospect of a thrilling finish in the Premiership this season. The title race will not be all over by Easter, let alone Christmas...



Dummy run... Gianfranco Zola hones his dead-ball skills at Chelsea's London training ground in preparation for today's Premiership match with West Ham

There has not been a full Premiership programme for two weeks but the pre-Christmas lull has still produced some significant results. The Liverpool attack has savaged two of the lamer ducks...

field Wednesday leave McManaman bound and gagged as they win 1-0 at Anfield. Manchester United appear to be heading for a 2-0 win at West Ham...

have been better designed to help United pick up the scent of the championship. Tomorrow they are at home to Peter Reid's hard-working Sunderland...

and Sheffield Wednesday away. Villa and Middlesbrough at home. Everton should enjoy it, too, with home matches against Leeds, Wimbledon and Blackburn...

With Coventry to come, Middlesbrough could end the holiday stuck in the bottom three. Last season the three stragglers on New Year's Day were Manchester City, Queens Park Rangers and Bolton Wanderers...

ter and West Ham away after they have met Arsenal and Manchester United at home, turn their faces to the wall following Frank Clark's departure. Forest still take the field to the strains of Robin Hood riding through the glen but have spent almost the entire season being plundered by the rich...

Team sheet

Chelsea v West Ham: Dan Petrescu, Mark Hughes and Roberto Di Matteo are an expected side for Chelsea but Gianfranco Zola is injured and Frank Leeson and Gennaro Gattuso are suspended...

Albion follow the trend by taking shares to market

WEST BROMWICH ALBION yesterday confirmed plans for a listing on the Alternative Investment Market that will value the club at 27.5 million. Albion will not be raising new money from the flotation but the move allows existing shareholders - who invested 24.4 million in a separate share issue in April - to trade their shares more easily...

A N Other

FEW English footballers have equalled this honest, midfielder for strength, staying power and the will to win. He was the piston that drove his home-town team to successive ways above their modest station on the old ILMER. Having been decorated in blue, he then underlined the achievement in red the following year...

Scottish preview

FALKIRK dismiss Bannon for fielding ineligible player. AMMONY BANNON yesterday paid a heavy price for an administrative error when he lost his job as manager of Falkirk. The club's chairman George Fulston took the decision as the First Division promotion-chasers faced up to a £25,000 fine by the Scottish League for fielding an ineligible player...

Newell calls the law on Sullivan

MIKE NEWELL, the Birmingham City striker who yesterday joined West Ham on a month's loan, has taken legal advice about criticism he received from the Birmingham chairman David Sullivan. Sullivan, commenting on the breakdown of Newell's £500,000 move to Bolton last week, is alleged to have said the striker had an "unreasonable attitude"...

Stuart Pearce's first team talk today should be interesting if some of his previous efforts as captain are anything to go by. His address to the troops before last season's UEFA Cup game in Auxerre finished with a stirring call to arms: "Remember, you're all English, you're better than them."

AND still on the Trent, Stuart Pearce's first team talk today should be interesting if some of his previous efforts as captain are anything to go by. His address to the troops before last season's UEFA Cup game in Auxerre finished with a stirring call to arms: "Remember, you're all English, you're better than them."

1996-7 Season PREMIERSHIP FOOTBALL Tickets available for various clubs

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Handwritten text at the bottom of the page.

Beed ahead of the game

Cricket

Zimbabwe v England: first Test, third day

Hussain tucks in to set up a vision of victory

David Hoppe in Bulawayo

NASSER HUSSAIN'S third century since his Test debut...

England resume today at 306 for four, only 70 runs in arrears...

England know the feeling, a succession of indifferent displays having caused increasing edginess...



Run of success... Hussain celebrates a timely century

brought a chance of victory. England resume today at 306 for four...

England's exposure to three leading leg-spinners in Kumble, Mustaq and now Strang...

England's exposure to three leading leg-spinners in Kumble, Mustaq and now Strang...

this occasion the fear was that Paul Strang would emerge from it...

Thorp, the one out-of-form batsman in England's leading six, departed to a horrible shock...

He had battled with great panache for a time but became England's only wicket to fall before lunch...

Scoreboard

Table with columns for batsmen, runs, and bowlers. Includes names like Hussain, Strang, and bowlers like Warne, Muttiah Muralidharan.

Constant struggle for breath in Strang's stranglehold

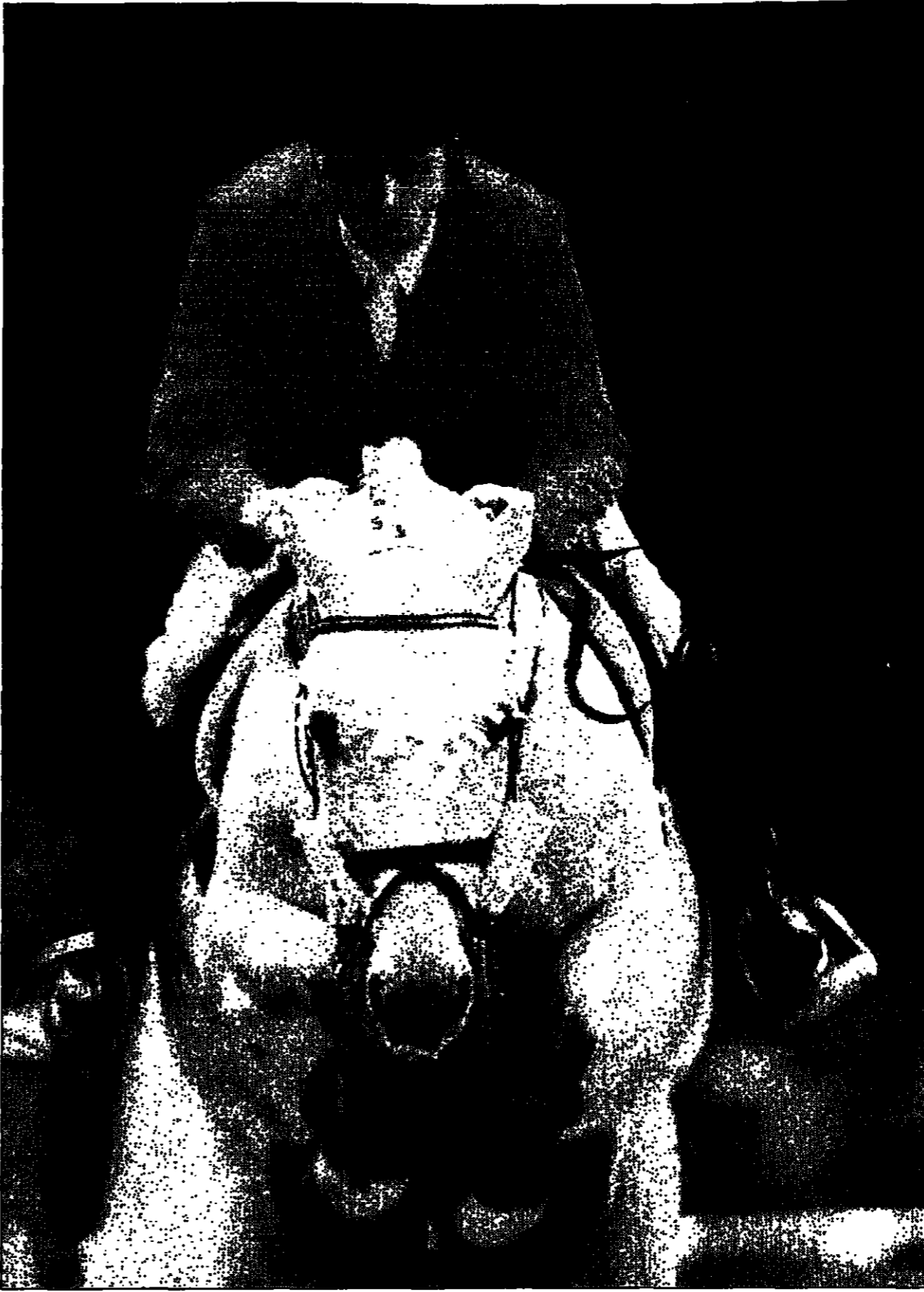
Paul Allott considers the upward turn in fortunes of Zimbabwe's classy leg-spinner

THE MORNING was the sort more readily associated with Manchester than Bulawayo...

England's exposure to three leading leg-spinners in Kumble, Mustaq and now Strang...

when the googly proves successful since the deception is complete.

England's exposure to three leading leg-spinners in Kumble, Mustaq and now Strang...



Dreaming of a grey Christmas... Carsten-Otto Nagel on Wienerwiesel of Germany rises to the challenge of the Christmas Carol Stakes...

Third Olympia win for Whitaker

John Kerr at Olympia

JOHN WHITAKER continued Britain's run of success at the Olympia Showjumping Championships...

large Grannusch, winners of the major prize on the opening night and again favoured by the draw...

held off a German challenge to win the Pair Relay. On Thursday night the Vink Masters...

fourth round to tackle five formidable fences. When Romp and Samantha and Britain's James Fisher...

Results

Basketball: Toronto 86, Milwaukee 83; Chicago 83, Charlotte 72; Utah 84, Miami 87...

Tennis: Andre Agassi 6-3, 6-4; Andre Agassi 6-3, 6-4; Andre Agassi 6-3, 6-4...

Alpine Skiing: Alberto Tomba 1:57.27; Doro Merande 1:57.27; Doro Merande 1:57.27...

Ice Hockey: New York Rangers 4, Philadelphia Flyers 2; Philadelphia Flyers 2, New York Rangers 4...

Cricket: Brian Lara at last rediscovered his best form as the West Indians rallied on the second day...

Chess: Nigel Short made a confident start in reply to England's impressive total of 201...

Ski Hotline: The Latest snow and weather reports from almost 200 resorts in Europe and North America.

Rugby League

Gibson joins Leeds influx

Paul Fitzpatrick

LEEDS RHINOS continue to strengthen their squad for the 1997 Super League season...

"I am certain he will prove a great crowd favourite very quickly," he added. Wigan's latest signing Doc Murray...

Murray said: "I'm playing well with Wigan, then I believe that I will have a great chance of making my presence felt at Test level."

Tennis

Cash's court manners may prove to be expensive

THE chances of Pat Cash landing a wild card to compete in next month's Australian Open...

Squash

New fine and ban for Hill

ANTHONY HILL, an Australian regularly in trouble on the professional circuit, has been suspended for three months...

Hockey

Sydney upgrade and Sixsmith award provide timely fillip

IT was not a bad week for hockey, led by the international federation's confirmation that 10 women's teams will take part in the Sydney Olympics...

Sport in brief

Motor Racing: All grand prix cars will be fitted with accident data recorders from the start of the 1997 world championship season...

Swimming

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS (Brisbane): Steve Probst (USA) 2:00.00; Steve Probst (USA) 2:00.00; Steve Probst (USA) 2:00.00...

Basketball

The Derby Storm have signed Lorenzo Pearson, a 6ft 8in centre-forward who completed his college career at the University of Miami last season...

Sailing

With less than a week to go to the start of the Sydney-Hobart Race, the Big Boat Challenge in Sydney Harbour provided a dramatic preview...

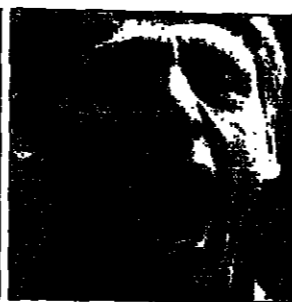
Chess

Britain's top-seeded Nigel Short made a confident start in reply to England's impressive total of 201...

Ski Hotline logo and contact information: 0891 002 006, 0897 500 652



Exile on main street Anderson prepares for cup holders 20



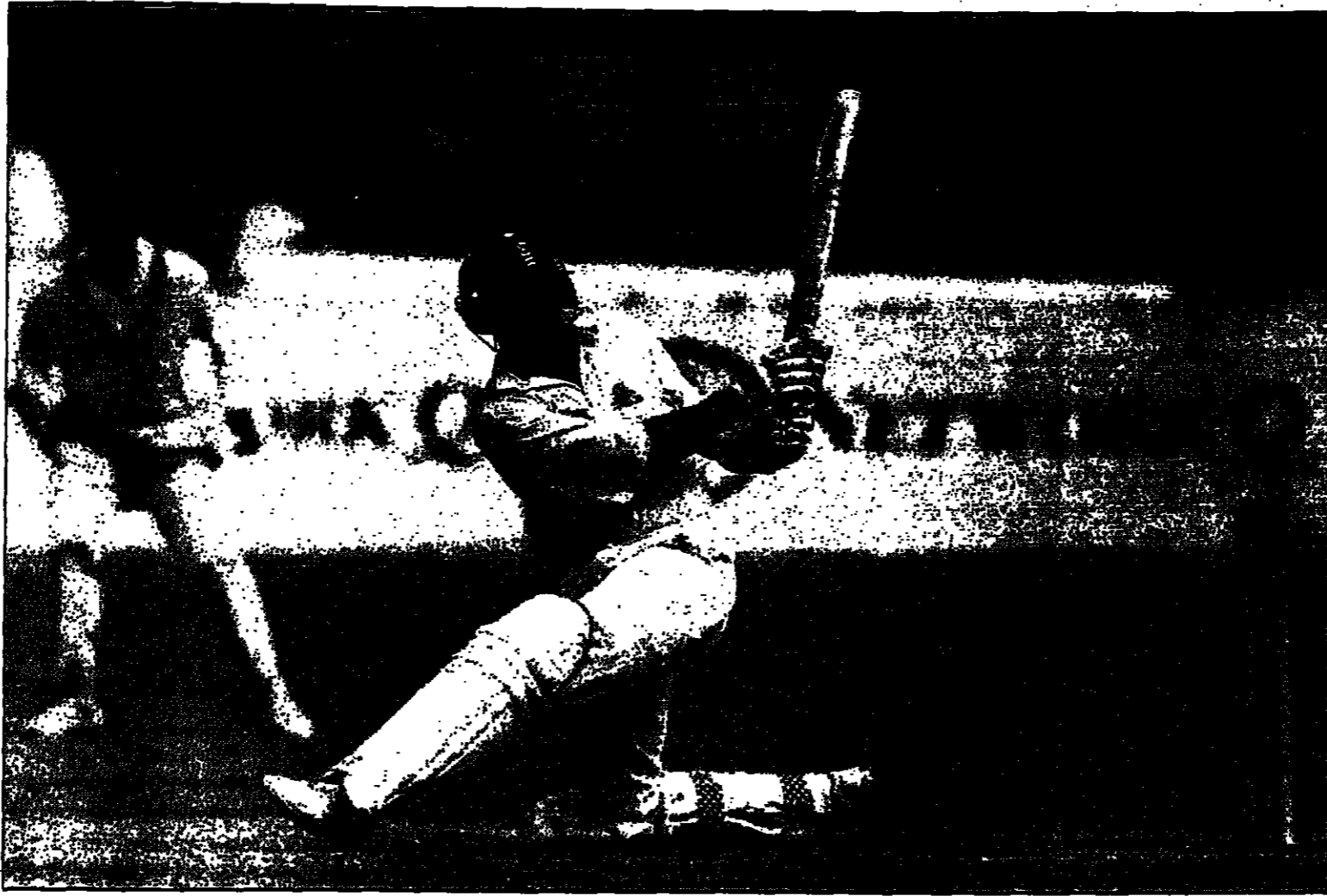
Taking over at the bottom Pearce in the hot seat at Forest 22

The Guardian sport

Hussain century rescues wobbly England

A CENTURY from Nasser Hussain steadied England nerves in the first Test against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo yesterday when the tourists finished on 306 for four, only 70 behind. Hussain finished unbeaten on 101 and, with John Crawley also resuming this morning on 51, England are well placed now to get on top. "Our aim is now to get a good lead," said Hussain. "So far we have not seen how Zimbabwe bat when under a bit of pressure. They were under a little bit in last Sunday's one-dayer and I didn't think they looked very comfortable." Hussain and Crawley had come together with England wobbling at 180 for four against the leg-spin of Paul Strang.

David Hopps and Paul Allott, page 23



Hot shot... England's vice-captain Nasser Hussain posts another boundary on the way to his unbeaten 101 yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: STU FORSTER

Ian Ross on an unauthorised postponement that could cost Bryan Robson's team vital Premier League points

Depleted Boro walk out on Blackburn

MIDDLESBOROUGH could have three Premier League points deducted for withdrawing at 24 hours' notice from their away match with fellow strugglers Blackburn today, a decision

which has infuriated Rovers and their supporters. Without consulting either Premier League or Blackburn officials, the Teesside club announced that they would not travel to Ewood Park because 23 of their players were either

injured or ill, leaving only seven men with first-team experience available. Middlesbrough are fifth from bottom of the Premiership table, Blackburn one place below them. This is the first time since

the Premier League was formed five years ago that a game has been postponed because a club is unable to field a team, and Middlesbrough are bracing themselves for disciplinary action. This may well include the deduction of

league points, which would undermine their increasingly grim fight against relegation. "The decision by Middlesbrough to postpone tomorrow's fixture with Blackburn Rovers has not been approved by the FA Premier League," a Premier League spokesman said last night. "The postponement is therefore in breach of regulations and will be considered by a disciplinary panel in the New Year."

"We are ready to face an inquiry," said Middlesbrough's manager Bryan Robson. "We asked the league if they wanted to send an independent medical team to the club this afternoon to check but they said no. We have sent them all the information we have, including medical evidence. I have run out of players. We could now slip back into the relegation bracket, having been denied the right to a game."

His Blackburn counterpart, the caretaker-manager Tony Parkes, was unsympathetic and last night called for the league to award the three points to his club. "It is a totally unacceptable situation," he said. "Every club has injury and illness problems and no one has suffered more than us but you are obliged to fulfil your fixtures. We could now slip back into the relegation bracket, having been denied the right to a game."

Parkes added: "It is difficult to know what the punishment should be but at this moment I believe we should be awarded the points. It's as simple as that." Blackburn's anger was heightened by the fact that they were not officially informed of Middlesbrough's decision. The first they knew of the postponement was when a confused Rovers supporter rang Ewood Park early yesterday afternoon to say he had read the announcement on BBC's Centrex service. The decision could be construed as an act of open rebellion but Middlesbrough's chief executive Keith Lamb is

unrepentant. He claims that 23 players, including Robson and his assistant Viv Anderson, were deemed unfit to make the journey down to Lancashire. "We have an absolutely clear conscience over this," said Lamb. "We have 17 fit, contracted professional players. Three of them are goalkeepers and five have never been in the first-team squad, never mind the first team."

"Of the remaining nine, two have made the briefest of first-team appearances so we have seven first-team squad players fit. We felt the players we have available could not properly represent this club."

More soccer, page 22

Back benchers

...and the rest of the team...

...and the rest of the team...

...and the rest of the team...

Test of reality behind the Twin Towers



David Lacey

THE only surprising thing about this week's announcement that Wembley is to be the site of the new national stadium was that it took so long to state the obvious. Everyone expected it to win the vote. Details, largely financial, caused the delay.

Demolition work on the present Wembley Stadium, which will raise everything but the Twin Towers, is due to begin in 1998. The new 90,000-seat stadium should be operating by 2001. Already the Football Association sees the new Wembley as the centre-piece of its bid to host the 2006 World Cup.

So far so optimistic, yet the briefest of glances at Wembley's history suggests that nothing will be so straightforward as it may have appeared this week. When the 1926 British Empire Exhibition, of which the stadium was the centre-piece, closed amid massive debts one contemporary observer described the scene as "a vast white elephant, a rotting splendour of hopes and the grave of fortunes."

Garrett Southgate could not have put it better. An estimated cost of £200 million already looks a mite conservative and, even if this figure proves correct, the contribution from the National Lottery will still leave a shortfall of £80 million.

Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, has spoken of Lancaster Gate investing between £40m and £50m in the new stadium. But to judge from the time it took the FA, the Sports Council and Wembley to thrash out a leasing agreement, the building of Wembley Mark II may make your average pyramid look like a rush job. The present stadium, incidentally, was built in 300 days.

Even if the new Wembley arises on time it will not guarantee the success of England's World Cup bid. That will be decided by FIFA politics, which are becoming ever more labyrinthine.

If, as expected, Lennart Johansson replaces Joao Havelange as president in 1998 the next World Cup but two may well head back to Europe. Germany, however, were two years ahead of England in announcing their bid for 2006, and the FA will do well to make up for lost time.

Not that setting the pace guarantees anything. If it did, Japan would hardly be having to share the 2002 tournament with South Korea. Already doubts have been raised about the wisdom of rebuilding Wembley as a venue for both football and athletics. In its 73 years Wembley has seen greyhound racing, speedway, the 1948 Olympics, Billy Graham and Madonna. But it was purpose-built as a football stadium.

Alex Fynn, the former director of Saatchi & Saatchi who has written several books on the commercial side of football and is consultant to a number of clubs at home and abroad, believes it would have made more sense to renovate the present stadium, leaving Manchester's new 60,000-seat affair to host the 2001 World Athletic Championships and the Commonwealth Games the following year. Fynn does not believe that an English bid for the 2006 Olympics is practicable.

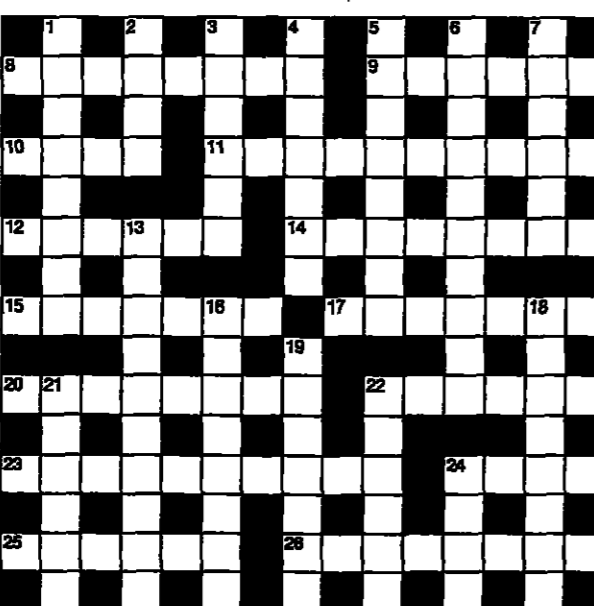
"We don't need a national stadium when we've already got Wembley," Fynn argues. "National stadiums are built for one major event and only become viable if football clubs, like Bayern in Munich, or Roma and Lazio in Rome, then move in. The 1992 Olympic Stadium in Barcelona is already a white elephant. Nou Camp is still the main football venue."

It could be argued that Wembley, a Barbara Cartland among stadiums, has been living for far too long on romantic traditions and that the reality is beyond renovation. But if, in trying to do all things to all sportsmen, the new Wembley loses the unique atmosphere which, in 1968 as much as 1998, confirmed its status as the world's favourite football ground, then something precious will have gone forever.

Sir Arthur Elvin, who began as an assistant in a Tottenham club at the 1926 exhibition, risked financial ruin to establish Wembley as the venue of legends. Now someone of similar vision is needed just along the road from Neasden — Sir John Hall, perhaps, if Newcastle City Council decides ducks are more important than Magpies.

Vandals dig up Orient pitch but Shilton game goes ahead PETER SHILTON will play his 1,000th League game against Brighton tomorrow despite an attempt by vandals to sabotage his big day by digging up parts of Leyton Orient's pitch. Orient's groundsman Charlie Hasler and his staff spent hours repairing the damage yesterday after the intruders dug up around the centre circle and in front of the main stand. "It's amazing what they did," said Hasler. "There was almost a three-foot hole in one place. It's taken us two days to repair the damage and get the pitch back in shape." Hasler is considering standing guard at Brisbane Road tonight to ensure his efforts are not wasted. "I want to make sure that nothing will spoil Sunday's game."

Guardian COLLINS Prize Crossword No 20,842



A copy of the Collins Roget's International Thesaurus will be sent to the first five correct entries drawn. Entries to Guardian Crossword No 20,842, P.O. Box 315, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2AX, by first post on Friday. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday, December 30.

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Collins Roget's Thesaurus advertisement with crossword solution grid

- Across: 8 Developing a leaning for a certain woman (8) 9 Having a little go in grey silk made (8) 10 A joiner creating a row (4) 11 He expects hard work to demand a lot in the trial (10) 12 Fruit will be provided when mothers take over (8) 14 Think to mislead a supporter (8) 17 Not one can get in there (7) 18 Following recent set-back, a fine man was discharged (4,3) 20 Scarcity, but only for a brief period (8)

- Down: 1 Time ain't for frittering, pal! (8) 2 Close fight (4) 3 Hear sterling is to catch up (8) 4 The fool's into drink — it offers some comfort (7) 5 Begin to approach outside people with a note (8) 6 Given no support, getting tissues and breaking down (10) 7 Attachment for a girl over the water (8) 13 Wild Australian or Roman merrymaking (10) 16 Sea about dainty dainties with much pleasure (8)

- 18 A hazard in the underground inflamed a politician (8) 19 Confidential information put about within circles (7) 21 The man did some copying and made a pile (8) 22 Possibly four soldiers are responsible for the connection (8) 24 Judicious manner (4)

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Advertisement for 'Oh S*g!!! What can I get for Vicky?' featuring music from the movie 'Evita' with lyrics and descriptions of songs like 'I've Had My Moments', 'I Don't Care', 'I've Had My Moments', 'I Don't Care', 'I've Had My Moments', 'I Don't Care'.